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Arnold

King Alfred in English Poetry.

A Dissertation

Presented to the Philosophical Faculty

of the

University of Leipzig

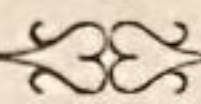
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J. Loring Arnold.



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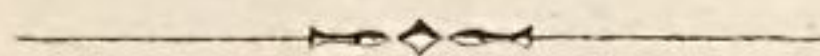


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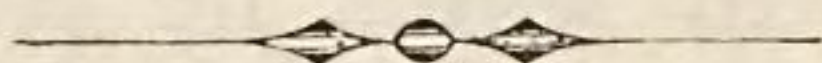
Preface.

Alfred Austin, the present poet laureate of England, in the preface to his new poem, "England's Darling",¹⁾ writes as follows: "In the spacious gallery of commanding characters commemorated in English Poetry, there is a strange and unaccountable blank. Where we look for the most illustrious figure of all, there is an empty niche. The greatest of Englishmen has never been celebrated by an English Poet." The purpose of the present essay is not primarily to show the incorrectness of this statement and to prove beyond doubt that King Alfred has been commemorated in English verse, but the essay seeks simply to fill an evident blank in the records of English literature. It seeks merely to present a careful comparison of the figure of Alfred in those English poems of length in which he plays the chief role. And there is not an unlikelihood that Mr. Austin's statement, although in the letter incorrect, may be shown in its spirit to embody much truth.

The poems that come under consideration will also be discussed with regard to their fidelity to history. As they deal mostly with the same part of Alfred's career, it would be well, could we trace through the various periods of Literature, the growth of those legends and traditions on which the poets have based their plots. The events, however, stand out in too clear an historic light. Rather than a development and elaboration of myths, as in the case of the Arthur cycle, we find that the more modern the poet, the greater is his fidelity to historic circumstance. What development there is, is to be sought rather in the conception of the hero's character itself than in the events in which he figures. Yet the material offered the artist is not poor in story, and I

¹⁾ Published by Macmillan & Co., London, 1896.

endeavour, in an introduction, to point out the first appearance of those traditions that have a literary interest, and the various authorities in which they are found. The introduction goes further. It is at the same time a brief survey of the earlier literature of Great Britain devoted to King Alfred. Wherever an author's conception of this hero is particularly marked, I have noted it. Wherever I have found a tribute of any length to England's greatest king, I have quoted from it. This mode of treatment will reveal a greatly varying appreciation of the character of Alfred. As will be obvious from the principal part of the essay, this feeling developed in the preceding, and first half of the present, century into a certain *Verherrlichung* of the hero. Indeed, traces of such glorification appear much earlier. Then a conception of more recent date seems to reveal a return to the realism of history and primitive legend. Finally, in Mr. Austin's "England's Darling", we are presented with a work both rich in historic reference and yet, to some extent, idealistic — a seeking of the ideal in the real, so characteristic of the latter years of this nineteenth century.



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I. Introduction.

It is necessary here to anticipate somewhat the main section of this essay. That portion of Alfred's career which the poets have, for the most part, chosen as the basis of their plots extends from the time of his withdrawal into seclusion in the marshes of Somerset, A. D. 878, to the formation of the treaty with Guthrum the following year. The reason for this choice is not far to seek. These were the most critical months of Alfred's life, not only for himself but for all England. As Lappenberg says, "*Hätte ihn damals ein feindlicher Speer getroffen, hätte sein hohes Herz verzagen, ihn zu einer schwächlich verzweifelnden Aufopferung reizen oder ihm Rettung bei überseeischen Stammgenossen gestatten können, so wäre der Königsstamm wie die Freiheit in England erloschen; dieses Land wäre die Beute, wäre die Wüste der Seeräuber geworden.*"¹⁾ This period embraces the battle of Ethandune and those legends that cluster directly or indirectly about Alfred's life in the neighbourhood of Athelnay. I refer to certain faults imputed to Alfred as the cause of his misfortunes, to the reproofs of St. Neot, the story of the house-wife and the cakes, the visits of St. Cuthbert to the king, first in the guise of a needy pilgrim, next as an apparition, and Alfred's visit as a minstrel to the Danish camp. By allowable anachronism, reference is also made by the poets to the earliest naval victories of the English fleet and to the great king's activity in the cause of law, education, religion, and the general improvement of his country. The work of sifting and comparing the various sources of these traditions belongs properly to the historian, and has been

¹⁾ Geschichte von England, p. 318.

excellently done by Turner¹⁾, Pauli²⁾, Lappenberg³⁾, and other well-known authorities. The present introduction, therefore, does not claim to be an exhaustive treatise. The various legends that have for us a literary interest will be mentioned each time they appear in the works discussed. But purely historical incidents, having been once noticed, do not regularly receive attention again. It is to be understood that they occur, in the main, in all moderately trustworthy chroniclers.

The earliest mention of King Alfred in the Anglo-Saxon literature preserved to us occurs naturally enough in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.⁴⁾ There he is first spoken of under the year 854, where the *Corpus Christi M S.* reads, "*and þy ilcan geare sende Aethelwulf cyning Aelfred his sunu to Rome.*"⁵⁾ From this date on he is mentioned frequently until his death in 901. The entries record chiefly his exploits with the Danes in the plain, straight-forward style of the time. Some of the entries most noteworthy as furnishing the basis for modern poetry on Alfred are the following: Alfred's succession to the throne in 871⁶⁾, his retirement to the marshes of Somerset in 878⁷⁾, his reappearance among his people the following year, the battle of Ethandune and the treaty with Guthrum,⁸⁾ and the naval successes of the English fleet. The first of these was in 875⁹⁾: a description of Alfred's ships is given under 897¹⁰⁾. One passage that has become a part of current tradition reads —

"An. DCCCLXXVIII. & micel þæs folces ofer sæ adræfdon & þæs oþres þone mæstan dæl hie geridon & him to gecirdon butan þam cyninge Aelfrede & he lytele werede unieþelice æfter wudum fôr & on morfæstenum."⁷⁾

In these early records, scant as they are, the strong personality of one of England's greatest rulers already begins to make itself felt. In default of a more copious literature in Anglo-Saxon, there might be mentioned here some passages that have a biographical turn from Alfred's own works. For instance, in his edition of the laws the modest king says,

1) The History of the Anglo-Saxons by Sharon Turner, Paris, 1840.
 2) Geschichte von England, von J. M. Lappenberg, Hamburg, 1834.
 3) König Alfred und seine Stelle in der Geschichte Englands, von Reinhold Pauli, Berlin, 1851.
 4) Or the original registers on which parts of the chronicle are based. See Grundriss zur Geschichte der Angelsächsischen Literatur von Prof. Wülker, p. 442 etc.
 5) The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Thorpe, London, 1861. — Page 122.
 6) Ibid., p. 136. 7) Ibid., p. 146. 8) Ibid., p. 148. 9) Ibid., p. 144. 10) Ibid., p. 174.

“Ic þa Aelfred cyning þas togædere gegaderode & awritan het monage þara þe ure foregangen heoldon þá þe me licodon & manege þara þe me ne licodon ic âwearp mit minra witenas geþeahte & on oðre wisan behead to healdenne forþam ic ne dorste geðristlæcan þara minra awuht feala on gewrit settan forþam me wær uncuð hwæt þær þam lician wolde þe æfter us wæren.”¹⁾ These last words have become a part of current tradition and are known by every well-bred English-speaking school-boy.

In the preface to his translation of Gregory’s “Pastoral Care”, Alfred has considerable to say on the state of learning in England, when he came to the kingdom. His zeal for the education of the clergy breathes from every paragraph.²⁾ In his translation of Beda’s Ecclesiastical History, however, he does not name himself as the author;³⁾ and in his Orosius there is but a single reference to himself.

In his translation of Boethius, on the other hand, “Alfred has taken occasion to insert in various parts many of his own thoughts and feelings. He has composed several little moral essays, and by them has transmitted himself to posterity in his own words and manner”⁴⁾. Here then is one of the most valuable ancient sources for studying the character of England’s national hero. Turner has made a close comparison of this translation with the original in order to discover those portions of the work that represent Alfred’s independent thought. The fifth book is richest in such passages. The “Proœmium” opens, “*Alfred Kuning wæs wealhstod ðisse bec*”⁵⁾. But elsewhere, following the example of his original, the royal author refers to himself simply with the pronoun *ic*. A passage equally well known with the one quoted from the laws is the following.

“þæt is nu hrapost to secganne. þæt ic wilnode weorþfullice to libbanne þa hwile þe ic lifede. & æfter minum life þam monnum to læfanne þe æfter me wæren min gemynd on godum weorcum.”⁶⁾

¹⁾ Ancient Laws and Institutes of England, ed. by Thorpe, 1840. — Page 26.

²⁾ Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader, Macmillan & Co., pp. 4—7.

³⁾ Wülker’s Grundriss, p. 405.

⁴⁾ Turner, Hist. of the A.-S., Vol. II. p. 14.

⁵⁾ King Alfred’s Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiae, ed. by J. S. Cardale. — Page ii.

⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 92.

In the preface of Alfred's Boethius the metrical translation is also attributed to him. Prof. Wülker in his "Grundriss", however, closes the discussion of the authorship with the remark, "Schlagende Gründe scheinen mir auf keiner Seite vorgebracht worden zu sein" (p. 435).

Once more, in the "Soliloquies" of Augustin, Alfred is named as translator. — "*Hær endiað þa cwidas þe ælfred kining alæs of þære bec þe we hatað on (Leden de uidendo deo and on Englisc be zodes ansyne).*"¹⁾ And finally Alfred mentions himself by name in his preface to the Anglo-Saxon version of Gregory's "Dialogues", which at the king's request, Bishop Werfrith translated from the Latin²⁾.

Another Anglo-Saxon work where Alfred's name is found is the "Homilies" of Aelfric. Here the author speaks of the books "*ðe Aelfred cyning snoterlice awende of Ledene on Englisc, þa sind to hæbbenne*"³⁾. He mentions further the "Historia Anglorum" "*ða ðe Aelfred cyning of Ledene on Englisc awende,*"⁴⁾ and also "the "Dialogues" of Gregor of which he says, "*Seo Bôc is on Englisc awend.*"⁵⁾ The Homilies of Aelfric were written about 990 A. D.⁶⁾

There is also preserved to us a life of St. Neot, of which Prof. Wülker says, "*Mir scheint in der Art der Behandlung und in der ganzen Ausdrucksweise vieles für Aelfric zu sprechen*"⁷⁾ Turner says, further, "The Saxon life seems to be an epitome of some more ancient one."⁸⁾ This Latin life then, now probably lost, gave for the first time, so far as we know, the legend of the house-wife and the cakes. The Anglo-Saxon life and a later one in Latin ascribed to an Abbot of Croyland in 1180, together with the account from the text of Asser and that by Matthew of Westminster, are given in translation by Turner (I. 330—331), where they may be compared.

¹⁾ Prof. Wülker's Grundriss, p. 418.

²⁾ See Anglia, Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie, ed. by Prof. Wülker. Halle. Vol. 2, p. 68.

³⁾ Ed. by Bj. Thorpe, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. London, 1844 & 46. — Vol. I. p. 2.

⁴⁾ Ibid., II. p. 116.

⁵⁾ Ibid., II. p. 358.

⁶⁾ Wülker's Grundriss, p. 459.

⁷⁾ Grundriss, p. 494.

⁸⁾ Hist. of the A.-S., I. p. 324, note 2. — Compare also the remarks of Prof. Wülker that precede his edition of the Anglo-Saxon life in Anglia III. p. 103.

These lives of St. Neot contain also the well-known references to Alfred's misconduct, for which he was reproved by the saint.¹⁾ Later, before the battle of Ethandune, St. Neot appeared to Alfred in a dream to offer him aid and encouragement in his struggle with the Danes.²⁾ St. Cuthbert seems afterward to have outshone Neot as Alfred's patron saint.

Among the Latin-writing historians of England, the one to whom we are most indebted for information regarding King Alfred is his biographer Asser. The work is entitled "*Annales Rerum Gestarum Alfredi Magni*", and the dedication reads, "*Domino meo venerabili piissimoque omnium Britanniae insulae Christianorum rectori Aelfred Anglorum Saxonum regi. Asser omnium servorum Dei ultimus millemodam ad vota desideriorum utriusque vitae prosperitatem.*"³⁾ This writer tells of his first meeting with his royal patron in the passage beginning, "*His temporibus ego quoque a rege advocatus de occiduis et ultimus Britanniae finibus ad Saxoniam adveni*" etc.⁴⁾ That portion of the biography which covers the years from 849, the date of Alfred's birth, to 887, is a translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the same period with considerable additions. "The second portion seems to be chiefly the result of the author's personal observation, and is the source of all that we can authentically know of the private life of that eminent Prince"⁵⁾ The narrative breaks off abruptly at the year 893.

The MSS. of Asser's work are wanting in many of those legends about Alfred which play so prominent a part in current tradition and modern literature. Two legends, however, that of the house-wife and the cakes and of the reproofs of St. Neot, were introduced by archbishop Parker into his edition of Asser in A. D. 1574⁶⁾ and since then have maintained their place in the text. The venerable biographer, however, does tell the story of the boy's zeal for learning and of the prize book, offered by

1) Turner, I. pp. 323—326.

2) Anglia III. pp. 112—113.

3) Monumenta Historica Britannica, ed. by T. D. Hardy, Vol. I. p. 467.

4) Ibid., p. 487 c.

5) Ibid., preface, p. 78. — For the authenticity of Asser's work see L. Stephans Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. II., p. 161.

6) Mon. Hist. Brit., pref., pp. 79 and 81 and of the text, pp. 480—1 with notes. There is also given the source for Parker's interpolations, a work falsely attributed to Asser, bound up with the MS. that Parker used.

his mother to the most studious of her sons.¹⁾ Asser also refers to Alfred's illness in his youth²⁾ and to his sudden attack at the marriage ceremony³⁾. And he tells how the early illness⁴⁾ was an answer to Alfred's prayer for assistance against youthful lust.⁵⁾ But at the time of Alfred's retirement no fault is imputed to the king. He simply leads an unquiet life in *magna tribulatione*.⁶⁾ It is impossible here to do justice to Asser. His work must ever remain the great source of most of our direct knowledge concerning Alfred. Without references we mention Alfred's encouragement of learning, his piety, liberality, and justice, as receiving particular attention at the hands of his biographer.

In a period of almost two hundred years after Asser, the only Latin historian that appears is Aethelweard. He lived toward the close of the tenth century and into the beginning of the eleventh. He is thought by some to be that Ealdorman Aethelweard to whom Aelfric dedicated his "Lives of the Saints" and his translation of the book of Genesis⁷⁾. The chronicle of Asser is for the most part an abridged translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It states simply facts, omitting both amplification and the legends referred to in our opening paragraph, p. 1.

The next Latin chronicler to busy himself with this period of history was Florence of Worcester, who lived a century later than Aethelweard. He adopted for the basis of his history the works of Maxianus, Scotus and Beda, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the lives of various saints. "From the year 849 to the year 888, Florence abridges and transposes Asser's Life of Alfred occasionally adding a few passages from the [Anglo-]Saxon Chronicle. . . . From the year 888 to the year 946, Florence again chiefly confines himself to the [Anglo-]Saxon Chronicle, though he frequently differs from it in his chronology."⁸⁾ We find in Florence little of interest to our present investigation that has not already been accounted for. His chronicle, however, is much fuller than any other thusfar mentioned. It is also more complete

¹⁾ Ibid., p. 474 a. ²⁾ Ibid., p. 474 b. ³⁾ Ibid., p. 484 c d. ⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 492 c. ⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 485 b.

⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 480 b. The passage on which Turner bases his theory as to the cause of Alfred's withdrawal to Somerset is an interpolation. See Turner, I. p. 326, also Mon. Hist. Brit. pref. pp. 79, 81, and of the text p. 480 d.

⁷⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., preface, p. 81.

⁸⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., pref., p. 84.

than that of Symeon of Durham, to be next considered. Besides the military exploits of Alfred, it gives considerable space to an account of his bodily sufferings, his acts of government, religious foundations, division of the revenue, division of time, judicial administration, etc.¹⁾ Florence however omits all those legends that have furnished modern poets with their plots. We may close this paragraph, therefore, with his simple tribute to Alfred under the year 901. "*Wintonae in Novo Monasterio sepultus beatae immortalitatis stolum et resurrectionis gloriam cum justis expectat.*"²⁾

The next Latin chronicler that attracts our notice is Symeon of Durham, whose "Historia Regum" ends with the year 1129.³⁾ That part of his work which relates to Alfred is extracted for the most part from Asser.⁴⁾ Besides Alfred's military exploits and the usual historic records, the author enlarges in a general way on Alfred's piety and beneficence.⁵⁾ Under the year 866, after telling the story of the prize book won by the youthful student, Symeon exclaims, "*O felix hominum genus! O rex prudens! gestas gestantem, sapientiae claves vehis, sapientiam diligis, sapiens eris, faciens judicium et justitiam in terris*" etc.⁶⁾ But our chief interest in Symeon is from the only legend of those having peculiar literary interest that he relates — the legend of St. Cuthbert. He records under the year 877. "*Tandem aperto confortatus oraculo per Sanctum Cuthbertum contra Danos pugnavit.*"⁷⁾ The apparition is again referred to in Lib. II. Cap. X. of the "Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae," also attributed to Symeon; and there the author says, "*Alibi plane per ordinem scriptum habetur.*"⁸⁾ The oldest known form of this legend is found in the ancient „*Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*," printed under Simeon's name in Mr. Arnold's edition.⁹⁾ There the other apparition of St. Cuthbert to Alfred in the guise of a pilgrim is also given. A still more amplified account of both apparitions

¹⁾ Florentii Wigorniensis Monachi Chronicon ex Chronicis, ed. by Bj. Thorpe, London, 1849. — Pages 103—108.

²⁾ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁾ In regard to Ingulf, who died in 1109, see p. 8, foot-note, also p. 11 of this dissertation.

⁴⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., preface, p. 87.

⁵⁾ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. by Thos. Arnold, London, 1885. — Vol. II. p. 105.

⁶⁾ Ibid., II. p. 83.

⁷⁾ Ibid., I. p. 62, and foot-note.

⁸⁾ Ibid., I. pp. 204—205.

occurs in the "*Capitula de Miraculo et Translationibus Sancti Cuthberti*,"¹⁾ also attributed to Symeon. Mr. Arnold is of the opinion that both the last mentioned works were, "in their original form at any rate, anterior in date to Symeon."²⁾ The substance of this legend is given by Pauli, pp. 132—134.

The chronicle of William of Malmesbury belongs also to the first half of the twelfth century. His *Gesta Regum Anglorum* is more pretentious than the chronicles thusfar discussed. Besides the usual record of military movements, etc., it notices Alfred's institution of tithings and hundreds,³⁾ his missions to Rome and India(?)⁴⁾, the founding of monasteries⁵⁾ and makes particular mention of his encouragement of learning and his literary efforts.⁶⁾ The treatment of the legends is therefore remarkable. No fault is imputed to Alfred, no mention is made of the reproof of Neot or the story of the adventure with the termagant house-wife. The legend of St. Cuthbert, however, is given at length,⁷⁾ and that of Alfred's visit to the Danish camp disguised as a harper is introduced.⁸⁾ The latter reads as follows: —

"Nec multo post, ergastulum exire ausus, magnae astutiae periculum fecit. Regis enim Danorum, sub specie mimi, subiens tentoria, unius tantum fidelissimi fruebatur conscientia: ibi, ut joculariae professor artis, etiam in secretaria triclinii admissus, nihil fuit arcanum quod non exciperet tum oculis tum auribus; pluresque dies ibi moratus, cum ex omnibus quae nosse desiderarat animo satisfacisset suo, Adelingham rediit, etc."⁹⁾

Henry of Huntingdon flourished also in the first half of the twelfth century. As he himself tells us, the chief sources for his "*Historia Anglorum*" were Beda and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.¹⁰⁾ Although recounting military movements pretty faithfully, he omits

¹⁾ Ibid., I. pp. 230—233.

²⁾ Ibid., I. p. 62, note b and pref. p. XXXI.

³⁾ *Wilhelmi Malmesbiriensis Monarchi Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. by Thos. D. Hardy, London, 1840. — Vol. I. p. 186.

⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 187. ⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 188. ⁶⁾ Ibid., pp. 189—193. ⁷⁾ Ibid., I. p. 180. ⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 181.

⁹⁾ According to a foot-note in Turner, I. p. 336, this incident of Alfred's visit "is mentioned by Ingulf, who was a lad in the reign of Edward the Confessor." But according to Stephen and Lee's *Dictionary of Nat'l Biography*, Riley in the *Archeological Review* for 1862 seems to have proved that the "*Historia*" attributed to Ingulf is a forgery. Riley, "with great ingenuity, assigns the compilation of the book to 1413—15, and regards it as the work of the prior Richard, then engaged, the abbot being blind, in a lawsuit with the people of Spalding and Multon on behalf of the abbey." He forged the book as testimony in this suit. — Vol. XXIX. p. 17.

¹⁰⁾ *Heinrici Archidiaconi Huntendunensis Historia Anglorum*, ed. by Thos. Arnold, London, 1879. — Page 3. Also compare pp. 146—147 with the A.-S. Chron. Thorpe's edition, I, pp. 146—148.

all legends of literary interest. About the only entry that bears definitely on the character of Alfred is the following panegyric entered under the year 901.

“Nobilitas innata tibi probitatis honorem,
Armipotens Alfrede, dedit, probitasque laborem,
Perpetuumque labor nomen: cui mixta dolori
Gaudia semper erant, spes semper mixta timori.
Si modo victor eras, ad crastina bella pavebas:
Si modo victus eras, ad crastina bella parabas.
Cui vestes sudore jugi, cui sica cruore
Tincta jugi, quantum sit onus regnare, probarunt.
Non fuit immensi quisquam per climata mundi,
Cui tot in adversis vel respirare liceret,
Nec tamen aut ferro contritus ponere ferrum,
Aut gladio potuit vitae finisse labores.
Jam post transactos vitae regnique dolores,
Christus ei sit vera quies, sceptrumque perenne.”¹⁾

We have thusfar traced as nearly as may be the beginnings of those traditions of Alfred that have furnished modern poets with their plots. A few chroniclers, however, still deserve mention.

Ailred of Riveaux lived from 1109(?) to 1166. In his “*De Generalogia Rerum Anglorum*”²⁾ the account of Alfred’s rule, so far as historic circumstance is concerned, is meagre. The chief characteristic of the narrative is the great piety attributed to Alfred. After the apparition of St. Cuthbert, he delivers to the army an address more like the words of an ecclesiastic than those of a general. His service to the church is dwelt upon. A characteristic tribute to him is the following: —

“Ita se bonis amabilem, impiis terribilem, ecclesiarum ministris pavidum, amicis et sociis jocundum, pauperibus mitem et largum exhibuit, ut videretur omnium hominum moribus ac naturae congruere, omnibus utilis ac necessarius esse. Et quod nunc raro inventitur in terris, illam maximam regis credidit dignitatem, nullam in ecclesiis Christi habere potestatem.”

Roger de Hovenden flourished also about the middle of the twelfth century. In “*Annalium Pars Prior*”³⁾ he gives faithfully the wars with the Danes and other historic incidents. The apparition of St. Cuthbert he also mentions. The other traditions of literary interest are omitted from his chronicle.

The greatest of the mediaeval chroniclers, Matthew of Paris,

¹⁾ *Historiae Anglorum*, p. 152.

²⁾ *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores X.* ed. by R. Twysden, London, 1652. pp. 352—356.

³⁾ *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores post Bedam praecipui*, Frankfurt, 1601. — Pages 414—421.

who flourished during the first half of the thirteenth century, naturally gives considerable space to Alfred in his "*Chronica Majora*." According to the editor, Mr. Luard, Matthew's authorities for the period that concerns us were "Florence of Worcester, Simeon of Durham, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury; Asser was unknown to the compiler, as he is always quoted at second hand from Florence."¹⁾ — With the exception of the visit to the Danish camp, Matthew's chronicle contains all those traditions of Alfred that play a prominent part in modern poetry. The following are related with considerable literary pretension: the story of Alfred's learning to read,²⁾ his early illness,³⁾ the story of the cakes,⁴⁾ the visit of St. Neot, and the vision of St. Cuthbert.⁵⁾ Mention is also made of Alfred's religious foundations,⁶⁾ his institutions of government,⁷⁾ etc. In noting Alfred's death, the author pays a tribute similar to that of Florence of Worcester; but more noteworthy is his description of the manners and wisdom of this king who was "*omnibus amabilis et affabilis, jocundus et in rerum disciplina perscrutator incomparabilis*."⁸⁾

All that is said of Matthew of Paris applies as well to the „*Flores Historiarum*” of the fictitious Matthew of Westminster.⁹⁾

Another great chronicle of the middle ages is that of Ranulphus Higden. He flourished in the latter half of the fourteenth century. His account of Alfred is contained chiefly in chapters 30 and 31 of book V. and the first three chapters of book VI.¹⁰⁾ In chapter 2 of his first book the compiler names his authorities. The following names occur: *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis*, *Henricus Huntingdonensis*, *Florentius Wigornensis*.¹¹⁾ This chronicle omits some of those incidents and traditions that we are considering: others are given in meagre form. In the childhood illness of Alfred, he is strangely sent to Ireland to be

¹⁾ *Matthaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, ed. by Henry R. Luard London, 1872. — Vol. I., p. XXXIV.

²⁾ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. p. 404.

³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 406. The whole tribute is excellent, but it is very similar to that of Florence, Thorpe's ed. I. p. 105, who in turn goes back to Asser, *Mon. Hist. Brit.*, p. 486.

⁹⁾ Edited by H. R. Luard, London, 1890. — Pages XI. and XXXIV.

¹⁰⁾ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, vol. VI. ed. by J. R. Lumby, London, 1876. — Pages 314—396.

¹¹⁾ *Ibid.*, vol. I. ed. by C. Babington, London, 1865. — Page 24.

cured by St. Modwenna.¹⁾ But in another place where his illness is again mentioned in connection with his religious zeal, he is made to seek St. Neot in Cornwall.²⁾ Nothing is said of Neot's reproaches. The illness at the wedding, however, is related.³⁾ His laws are mentioned,⁴⁾ his distribution of the revenue.⁵⁾ No fault is imputed to Alfred at the time of his retirement. The story of the house-wife and the cakes is also omitted. The visit of St. Cuthbert disguised as a pilgrim and the apparition of the saint in a dream are told at length.⁶⁾ The visit to the Danish camp is related briefly.⁷⁾ Scattered through his work Higden has other references to Alfred; e., g., the laws are mentioned (II. 92) and St. Cuthbert's body (II. 134). Higden's account closes with eight lines from Henry of Huntingdon's panegyric.

The "Scotichronicon" of Johannes de Fordun reaches to the year 1363.⁸⁾ The part that pertains to Alfred is essentially an abbreviation of the chronicle of Ailred of Riveaux.

The "Historia" of Ingulf has been noticed in a foot-note on p. 8 of this dissertation. The work contains accounts of Alfred's wars, works of government, authorship, etc.⁹⁾ The story of St. Cuthbert is also introduced and the visit to the Danish camp. The latter runs thus: "Nec multum post haec rex ipse fingens se esse joculatorem, assumpta cithera, tentoria Danorum adiit; ac in loca secretiora receptus, omnia suorum hostium secreta ediscens, cum suo desiderio satisfecisset incoquitus, et incolumis Adelingiam remeavit."¹⁰⁾

We need not confine ourselves to the Latin chroniclers. Two Anglo-Norman writers are also worthy of notice. The earlier of these, Geoffrei Gaimar, closed his work with the death of William Rufus, 1100 A. D. He chose for his basis the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. He however makes numerous additions, and not among the least noteworthy is his tribute to Alfred.¹¹⁾ —

¹⁾ Ibid., vol. VI. p. 318.

²⁾ Ibid., VI. p. 356.

³⁾ Ibid., VI. p. 358.

⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 354.

⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 360.

⁶⁾ Ibid., pp. 372, 374.

⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 376.

⁸⁾ Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon cum Supplementis ac Continuatione Walteri Boweri, Edinburg, 1759.

⁹⁾ Rerum Angl. Scrip. post Bedam., pp. 862 und 868—870.

¹⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 869, ll. 37—40.

¹¹⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., pref., p. 92.

"Il regnat bien vint e huit anz.
 Poi sunt tels homes vinanz.
 Car sages fu e bon guereier,
 Bien sout ses enemis pleisser;
 Nul mieldre clerc de lui n'esteit,
 Car en s'enfance apris l'aveit;
 Il fist escrivere un livre Engleis
 Des aventures, e des leis,
 E de batailles de la terre,
 E des reis ki firent la guere:
 E maint livere fist il escrivere
 U li bon clerc vont sovent lire.
 Dius ait merci de la sue alme,
 E Sainte Marie, la dame." ¹⁾

The other Anglo-Norman chronicle that deserves notice here is that of Pierre de Longtoft. He was a contemporary of Henry III. and Edward II. For the Anglo-Saxon and Norman period and to the death of Henry III. his sources were Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, and probably Florence of Worcester. ²⁾ His account is meagre and inexact. "In one place in his history of the Anglo-Saxons he confounds three different kings, Ethelred, Alfred the Great, and Alfred of Northumbria, and in another he confounds the two great Danish chief-tains, Guthrum and Rollo." ³⁾ Alfred's division of the day into three periods is attributed to Ethelred, his brother; and that prince is also credited with great liberality and zeal for education. ⁴⁾ In the field, Alfred's antagonist is Rollo. ⁵⁾ The latter, after his baptism, goes to Normandy. Gunter, the father of Haveloc, also wars with Alfred and is similarly subdued by God's aid. ⁶⁾ Interesting are the lines with which Pierre opens the reign of Alfred. —

"Alfreda, frere Elfrede, parfist en clergye,
 En tut Engleterre taunt vayllaunt ne fu mye,
 Rescenst la coronne et la seynurye." ⁷⁾

In recording Alfred's death, the chronicler says that he had been victorious in fifty-six battles.

Our investigation has already brought us into the old English period. Prof. Wülker in his "Geschichte der Englischen Literatur"

¹⁾ Ibid., p. 807, ll. 3445—3458.

²⁾ The Chronicle of Pierre de Longtoft, ed. by T. Wright, London, 1868. — Vol. I., p. XVIII.

³⁾ Ibid., I. p. XIX.

⁴⁾ Ibid., I. p. 314.

⁵⁾ Ibid., I. p. 316.

⁶⁾ Ibid., I. p. 318.

⁷⁾ Ibid., I. p. 316.

says, "Der Chronist Ailred von Riveaux (gest. 1166) und die Jahrbücher von Winchester erwähnen Sprachsammlungen des Königs, die in der zweiten Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts in England im Umlauf gewesen seien." ¹⁾ Three such collections are known under the common name of "The Proverbs of Alfred." In the first series the king admonishes certain distinguished subjects assembled at Seaford to follow Christ, seek wisdom, maintain justice, and be content with the duties and trials of this life. Particular interest attaches to the following references to Alfred.

"þar wes þe eorl Alurich.
of þare lawe swiþe wis.
And ek Ealured
englene hurde.
Englene durlyng;
on englene londe he wes kyng.
Heom he bi-gon lére.
so ye mawe i-hure.
hw hi. heore lif
lede scolden.
Alured. he wes in englene lond.
and king. wel swiþe strong.
He wes king. and he wes clerek.
wel he lunede godes werk.
He wes wis on his word.
and war. on his werke.
he wes þe wysuste mon:
þat wes engle-londe on.
þus queþ Alured
englene frouer." ²⁾

Many of these appellations have now become a tradition. Each strophe is introduced with the words "*þus queþ Alured.*" With the thirteenth strophe begins a different collection. ³⁾

"þus queþ Alured.
Lustep ye me leode.
ower is þe neode.
And ich en wille lére
wit and wisdom.
þat alle þing oner-gop." ⁴⁾

¹⁾ Page 79.

²⁾ An Old English Miscellany, ed. for the E. E. Text Soc. by R. Morris, 1872. — Page 102. In these quotations I follow the M S. reading as far as it goes — to strophe 15.

³⁾ See the article by Prof. Wülker in Paul u. Braunes Beiträge zur Deut. Spr. und Lit., Vol. I., pp. 240 folg.

⁴⁾ An Old Eng. Miscel. p. 114.

The admonitions here given are of more particular nature. They deal chiefly with conduct toward the wife, the friend, the child, etc. Each strophe begins as in the first series. The third series begins, —

“þus quad Alured:
Sone min swo leue,
site me nu bisides,
and hich þe wile sagen
soþe þewes.”¹⁾

It contains mostly advice in regard to the choice of a friend. — We have before us a practical example of King Alfred's reputation for great wisdom. He was regarded as a Solomon through the middle ages.

We next find mention of Alfred in the Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, which belongs to the latter half of the thirteenth century. For the time of Alfred this writer's authorities seem to have been William of Malmesbury, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (for two lines), and Henry of Huntingdon.²⁾ The portion of his work that treats of Alfred extends from line 5323 to 5411, inclusive. The contents of the section are the accession, the visit to Rome as a child, war of nine years, the story of St. Cuthbert, new arrivals of Danes and battle in East Anglia, the assembling of Alfred's troops, battle of “Edendone”, the baptism of “Gurmund”, a character-sketch of Alfred, his laws, the story of his learning to read, his division of the land, his strictness in government, his founding of abbies, his death. Outside this section mention is made of Alfred's birth (l. 5240), the battle of “Asserdone” (l. 5312), his election by the pope (l. 7243), his gifts to “Glastingbury” (6631).³⁾ We venture to quote the following passages because of their interest: —

“Arst he adde at Rome ybe. & nor is gret wisdom
þe pope leon him blessedde. þo he þuder com.
& þe kinges croune of þis lond. put in þis lond 3ut is
& elede him to be king. ar he were king ywis.
& he was king of engelond. of alle þat þer come.
þat verst þus yeled was. of þe pope of rome.”

¹⁾ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁾ The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, ed. by W. A. Wright, London, 1887. — Vol. I. p. XIX.

³⁾ We have given these contents more fully than when treating of the Latin chroniclers because of the superior interest that attaches to a work in English.

& suppe oþer after him of þe erchebissop echon
So þat biuore him pur king nas þer non." ¹⁾

"Vor þey me segge þat lawes beþ in worre tyme norlore
Nas it noȝt so bi is daye vor þei he in worre were
Lawes he made riȝtuolore & strengore þan er were
Clerc he was god ynon & ȝut as me telp me
He was more þan ten ȝer old ar he coupe is abece." ²⁾

„So streit he was þat þei me leyde amidde weyes heye
Seluer þat namon ne dorste hit nyme vor beye hor eye
Abbeys he rerde monion In mony studes ywis
At winchestre he rerde on þat nywe munstre ycluped ys
His lif eyȝte & tuenti ȝer in is kinedom ylaste
After is deþ he was ybured at winchestre atte laste." ³⁾

Robert Manning of Brunne lived from about 1260 to 1340. ⁴⁾ He made a free translation in verse of Pierre Longtoft's chronicle. In the part that deals with Alfred, the chief difference between Robert's version and the original is his introduction of numerous references to the story of Haveloc. We give his translation of Longtoft's opening lines. —

"Alfride his broþor, a gode clerk was he one.
Of body so douhty in Ingland was none.
He resceyued þe coroune, after his broþer dede." ⁵⁾

He gives the date of Alfred's death "nouþer more no lesse þan nine hundrith ȝere." ⁶⁾ We have given such consideration to Pierre Longtoft that we need not spend more time on his translator.

In the last quarter of the fourteenth century, John of Trivisa made a prose translation of the chronicle of Ranulphus Higden. Regarding its accuracy Mr. Hardy says, "This translation by Trivisa is generally strict and literal, but sometimes confused from a misapprehension of the author's meaning. Occasionally short notices are inserted by way of explanation." ⁷⁾ We have already discussed Trivisa's original at sufficient length ⁸⁾ to give a clear conception of the English work. We quote simply

¹⁾ Wright's edition, verses 5326—5333, p. 388.

²⁾ Ibid., vs. 5388—97, pp. 392—393.

³⁾ Ibid., vs. 5406—11, p. 394.

⁴⁾ Wülker's *Gesch. d. Eng. Lit.*, p. 105.

⁵⁾ Peter Longtoft's *Chronicle* (as illustrated and improved by Robert of Brunne), ed. by Thos. Hearne, Oxford, 1725. — Vol. I. p. 24.

⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁾ Babington's Higden, I. p. LIX.

⁸⁾ Dissertation, p. 10.

Travisa's rendering of Huntingdon's panegyric, with which Higden's account of Alfred closes. —

"Kyndeliche noblenesse and goodnesse ȝeveþ to þe worschippe, and goodnesse travaille, myȝty werriour Aluredus, and travaille name to þe wipoute eny ende. Joye with woo medled [he] hadde in every time. Alwey þin hope was medled wip gretene drede. þey he were now doun, he rayed bataille amorwe. [Ȝif he were wictord he dredde þe batayle a morwe.] After travaille of lyf of rennyng boþe nowþe his verray reste by Crist wip oute eny ende." ¹⁾

Babington and Lumby also edit a second translation of Higden by an unknown author. "It would appear," writes the editor, "that he executed his translation some time in the reign of Henry VI., between 1432 and 1450, and therefore some years before Eduard IV. was raised to the throne." ²⁾ The portion of this translation that pertains to Alfred shows no differences from Travisa's version that are worth noting here. The lines of Huntingdon are not translated from the Latin.

"The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland" ³⁾ by Androw of Wyntoun, who was born about 1350, contains the following brief reference to Alfred: —

"Bot in my bukys I fond nyne
Succedand persownys efftyre Ine,
Till a Kyng cald Alvered:
Thretty yhere he wes in dede
Off all Ingland Kyng wyth crowne,
And joysyd in possessyowne." ⁴⁾

John Capgrave's "Chronicle of England" begins, like so many of its contemporaries, with the creation of the world, and extends into the year 1417. Its notices of Alfred are very brief. According to the editor's preface this part of the work appears to be derived chiefly from Higden. ⁵⁾ It records that Alfred was the fourth son of Ethelwulf; and regarding his reign, it reads as follows:

"In this tyme regned Alured in Ynglond, the fourt son of Adelwold. He began to regn in the ȝere of our Lord DCCCLXXII. This man, be the councelle of Seint Ned, mad an open Scole of divers

¹⁾ Polychron. Ran. Higden, vol. VI., ed. by Lumby. — Page 397.

²⁾ Ibid., Vol. I. p. LXIX.

³⁾ Edited by David Laing, Edinburgh, 1872.

⁴⁾ Book VI., lines 2355—2360.

⁵⁾ The Chronicle of England by John Capgrave, ed. by F. C. Hingeston, London, 1858. — Page XXII.

sciens at Oxenford.¹⁾ He had many batailes with Danes; and, aftir many conflictes in which he had the wers, at the last he ovircam hem; and be his treti Godrus, here Kyng, was baptized, and went hom with his puple. XXVIII. 3ere he regned, and deied the servaunt of God.”²⁾

John Hardyng wrote a “Chronicle” in the Chaucer strophe, that began with Brutus and extended to Edward IV. (1461). He devotes some thirty-two stanzas to the reign of Alfred.³⁾ Of these, however, three deal exclusively with affairs of Duke Rollo. The opening stanzas are of considerable interest. —

„ALurede kyng was of this region,
That brother was to this noble Elfryde;
A perfect clerke, proud in opynyon,
As clerkes could discerne and proued;
In knighthode [also] approued and notified
So plenerly, that no man knewe his peer,
So good a knight he was and singuler.
In battayles many in his fathers dayes,
And also in his brethren tyme al thre,
He fought ful ofte, and bare hym wel alwayes,
That for his dedes and singularitee,
He was commended among thenemytee,
Within the land and out, as wel as knowe,
His fame among the people hye was blowe.”

Then follows a dry account of the wars with the Danes, and the outcome in the treaty with Guthrum and the baptism of the warriors. The story of Alfred’s concealment in the neighbourhood of Athelnay is also given, and the tale of the cakes runs thus: —

“In Denwolfes house thoxherd of the towne
So was he then in [poore and symple] aray,
Where Denwolf cladde him in his owne gowne,
And tender was to him there alwaye,
[But hys wyfe made him to laboure aye]
wyth bakyng and with bruyng wonder sore,
In water beryng she made [him] worke ever more.”⁴⁾

It is also told how Denwolf was rewarded with a bishopric. The fleet is mentioned thus:

“But then the kyng the sea sayled throughout,
And shyppes gatte with mucche great ryches,
For to defend his land fro great distresse.”⁵⁾

¹⁾ For an account of the origin of this myth, see Mon. Hist. Brit. I., p. 489, note c.

²⁾ Capgrave, p. 113.

³⁾ The Chronicle of John Hardyng together with the Continuation by Richard Grafton, ed. by Henry Ellis, London, 1812. — Pages 199—206.

⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 202.

⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 204.

The founding of Oxford is dwelt upon at length, also Alfred's division of his revenue. Marvellous is his compilation from the "lawes of Troye and Brute, lawes Moluntynes and Marcians, with Danysche lawes and Grekysche also." ¹⁾ In the record of Alfred's death it is said he fought fifty-six battles with the Danes, sometimes successfully and sometimes himself overcome,

"But neverthelesse as ofte when so thei came,
He contred them, and kepte the land fro shame." ²⁾

There is but one more chronicler to be noted before we arrive at the period of modern literature, where the historians are too numerous for the present record to include them. This writer is Robert Fabyan. He stands at the very end of the Old English period, having died in 1512 or 1513. His authorities are very numerous, and his style is entertaining. Besides the wars of Alfred and general historic events, there are recorded the following: his struggle with youthful lust, his early illness, the apparitions of St. Cuthbert to him in Somerset, his visit to the Danish camp. ³⁾ The reproofs of Neot and the story of the house-wife and cakes are omitted. The founding of "the firste grammer scole at Oxenforde" is dwelt on, however, and the establishment of religious institutions. In another place ⁴⁾ his laws are spoken of. The author's tribute to Alfred is as follows:

"Whiche troubles and adversyties natwitstandynge, he kngyhtly and manfully resysted the malyce of his enemyes, and thanked God alwaye, what trowble so ever fyll to hym or his realmes and susteyned it with great humylyte and pacyence." ⁵⁾

¹⁾ Ibid., p. 206.

²⁾ Ibid., p. 206.

³⁾ The Chronicles of England and France, by Robert Fabyan, ed. by Henry Ellis, London, 1811. — Pages 164—170.

⁴⁾ Ibid., pp. 20—25.

⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 169—170.

II. Modern Alfred-Poetry.

I.

Having now given a brief survey of the literature devoted to King Alfred in the Anglo-Saxon and Old English periods, we are brought to the proper subject of our essay, a consideration of Alfred's place in modern English poetry. One might indeed continue the lines of treatment of the preceding section so as to include here the modern prose-writers as well. But that would necessarily extend the discussion over a multitude of historians, and its outcome would be more historical than literary. Our purpose is rather to show what place Alfred occupies in the modern ornamental literature of England. Four poems, therefore, will come into consideration. They will be taken up in chronological order. The earliest is in epic form; the other three are in dramatic form. In the present section, the plot of each of these works will be given in outline with an investigation of its fidelity to history. In the next section of this essay, there is offered a detailed comparison of the figure of the hero in its fourfold presentation.

In 1723 there was printed a work entitled, "Alfred, an Epick Poem. In Twelve Books, by Richard Blackmore, M. D." ¹⁾ It was "printed by W. Botham for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church Yard," London. This book is dedicated to the "illustrious Prince Frederick of Hanover;" and the author's purpose is given in the preface as follows: "Being ambitious to entertain and please the Reader in Order to his Instruction, as far as my Talent will extend, I have chosen for the subject of this Poem the Institution or forming of a young Prince for Empire, and the right Government of a People that is, or may be, committed to his Charge." (p. XLI.) This ponderous volume, like many another fond hope of the well-meaning but tedious London physician, "dropped dead-born

¹⁾ This work is very rare. My sincere gratitude is due the librarian at Trinity College, Dublin, for putting a copy of it at my disposal.

from the press.”¹⁾ The percentage of historical matter in it is very small, and the author might, in better accord with accepted legend, have named his work a King Arthur or a Parceval. Not until his twelfth book do we find any mention of that fight with the Danes which established Alfred’s throne. It is but his youthful prowess that is touched upon in book IV.²⁾ The first eleven books are taken up mainly with a description of Alfred’s travels, for which the only historic basis lies in two visits of the boy prince to Rome.³⁾ With the evident object of instructing his royal reader, the author not only expands this half fictitious journey beyond all limitations of taste, but he introduces into it a multitude of circumstances both tawdry and tedious. Its similarity with the duller portions of Virgil’s Aeneid is very striking, and the author seems to have believed that by aping that long-acknowledged poem he would be constructing an epic. And his excuse for taking this liberty with history is found in his preface, p. IX: “What I have said — — — is a sufficient Answer to Mr. Dennis, who objected to Prince Arthur that the Story was a Fiction, which the very Essence of an Epick Poem requires it should be; and indeed the very Word Poem takes its Rise from a Greek one, that signifies to create or feign.” As regards the personal character of the hero, however, if we omit numerous absurdities of achievement, we shall find some points of likeness with the character of the historical Alfred.

The contents of the poem is briefly as follows:

B. I. Prince Alfred with the consent of his father Atulpo and accompanied by his former instructor Guithun, leaves Britain for an extended foreign tour of observation, as a preparation for the kingly office. On the voyage from Rome to Naples he is shipwrecked in a storm raised by Lucifer, and is driven on the coast of Numidia. The prince and Guithun are the sole survivors. After much suffering and a fight with a panther, they are hospitably received by a hermit.

B. II. The hermit tells his story. He was born in Spain, in Salamanca. He served so well the court of Pamelune that the king Garcia made him archbishop of Navarre and later a coun-

¹⁾ This expression was used by Dr. Johnson in relation to another work by Blackmore, Eliza. — See The Poetical Works of Sir R. Blackmore. Cooke’s edition, London, pp. 5 and 7.

²⁾ See p. 21 of this essay.

³⁾ See Thorpe’s A.-S. Chron., pp. 122 and 124, also Asser in Mon. Hist. Brit., p. 470 a, e.

sellor of state. But his frankness and honesty emboldened his enemies, particularly the sect of the Lallites; and in order to save his life, following a heavenly admonition he fled the country. The hermit's narrative ended, after refreshment, the "*Saxon*" guests betake themselves to Tunisia.

B. III. Alfred and Guithun are discovered and entertained by Halla, the king of Tunisia. Here Dollah the bard sings in praise of poets, and Halla tells how the notaries of the muse are honored by his people. Alfred replies that they are not wholly unknown in Albion, and speaks of his own hope to encourage art and science. Later he himself sings an ode on "Divine Wisdom." Alfred also takes occasion to inspect the fleet and arsenals of Tunisia and to study its naval system.

B. IV. — Guithun, at the king's request, gives an account of Alfred's early success in Britain against the Danes, and of his experiences since leaving his native land. He has been at Antwerp, Agrippina, or Cologne, through Germany into Italy. At Rome he has been crowned with much magnificence by Pope Leo. Alfred heard on this occasion a harangue by "Labot, the Prelate of Britannick Race," and received good advice from the pope. The voyage from Ostia to Numidia is described.

B. V. — Proceeding from Tunisia to Parthenope, Alfred is entertained with respect by the king Artolan. While they are viewing together the neighbouring country, messengers arrive to acquaint the king of an insurrection. Alfred investigates the cause and offers his mediation. He is so successful that peace is restored and Artolan redresses the grievances and reforms the court. Soon thereafter a plot of the discarded courtiers against Alfred's life is revealed; but upon Alfred's intercession the conspirators are pardoned.

B. VI. — Alfred proceeds to Sicily and is kindly received by king Barlan. He finds the people sunk in effeminate luxury and vice. While he is exploring the island, Lucifer attempts to destroy him by an eruption of Mount Aetna; but Alfred is warned and saved by his guardian angel. Touched by the awful sight, the prince intercedes in prayer for the doomed island, and the demons are driven away.

B. VII. — Before Alfred can take leave of the court, he himself becomes entangled in its pleasures and falls in love with

Albana, a beautiful but dissolute lady. Warned by Guithun to leave Sicily, he has a vain struggle against his passion, until through his suffering in a fever he obtains the necessary moral strength. Albana plots his assassination, but is defeated of her object by her friend Mara. Alfred escapes; and believing him dead, Albana kills herself in anguish.

B. VIII. — Alfred sets sail for Spain, but Satan, again raising a storm, compells him to land on the coast of Africa. He falls asleep, and is carried in a vision by his guardian angel Amel to Tophet or Gehenna. There he sees the punishments inflicted on the spirits for various crimes and sins. The angel also foretells the successive changes that shall take place in the royal line of England until the poet's time.

B. IX. — The "Britons" are taken by the guards of King Agmat to the governor Albuzar. Refusing to pay worship to the sun, the deity of the land, they are in danger for their lives. Through his knowledge of astronomy, Guithun saves himself and his charge by predicting an opportune eclipse. The two are then worshipped as gods, and Albuzar is put to death by the indignant populace. This encourages the neighbouring king of Dara to make war. Alfred successfully leads Albuzar's troops against him. The aged king of Agmat now resigns his crown. It is offered to Alfred, but he refuses it.

B. X. — Alfred proceeds to Spain, to Hispalis, or Seville. Here he learns of the death of his father and the succession of his brother Ethelbald to the throne. He thence continues his journey to Lisbon, Fontarabia, and Pamelune. He is received with marked respect by Fortunio, king of Navarre. In that country a plague is raging, and Alfred induces the king to recall the hermit Silva from Numidia, whose wisdom may devise a remedy. The hermit pronounces it a judgment of Heaven, because of the notorious treaty-breakers of the preceding reign. The offenders are therefore removed, Silva is restored to his offices, and the land is healed.

B. XI. — Alfred journeys to Toulouse and Burgundy. In the latter country he is shocked by the unparalleled avarice and oppression of the king. An embassy from Navarre informs him of an insurrection headed by the dishonoured ministers in conjunction with the Moors, and begs Alfred to return. He complies, and at the head of Fortunio's army gains a signal victory.

B. XII. — On his return to Pamelune, the prince is received with great honour. News is brought him of the death of Ethelbald and the settlement of the crown upon Ethelred. The latter, hard-pressed by the Danes, beseeches Alfred's return. The prince hastens home just in time to be present at the death of his brother from a wound received in battle. Alfred is proclaimed king. The people flock to his camp near Selwood forest. They come chiefly from Devonshire, Dorset, Cornwall, and the West of England. The Danes are pitched near Edington, when Alfred proceeds against them. Disguised as a minstrel, he visits their camp. As his army is moving against the foe by night, it is hindered by a fog that Satan raises. With the rising sun, however, they open the battle, which is long and desperate. Gunter's queen and daughter Elsitha being taken prisoners, come before Alfred as suppliants. "Alfred gives them their liberty and sends them back to the king with great respect. King Gunter and his court, astonished at this generous action of Alfred, which they attribute to the power of his religion, resolve to make peace and become Christians." The treaty is then signed and rite of baptism administered at CUNETIO. "Alfred asks of Gunter Elsitha for his bride. Gunter and Elsitha consent to this, and the nuptials are solemnized."

From this mass of fiction it is not a difficult task to pick out the few events that have a historic basis. — Alfred did, at the wish of his father, make a journey to Rome, twice indeed, but at a time when he was too young to have any such experiences as are recounted here.¹⁾ He was anointed, and crowned, by the pope; and there were at that time English theologians in Rome. On his return from the second trip he passed through France, but his sojourn was rather at the French court than in Burgundy.²⁾ Alfred's giving way to youthful lust in Sicily and his moral recovery through illness suggest the story referred to on page 6 of this essay. In England, the insurrection of Ethelbald is mentioned in Blackmore in B. XII. (p. 414), but the reign of Ethelbert is ignored. As far as concerns Alfred's struggle with the Danes, the renewed courage in his people, the mustering of the army near Selwood forest (B. XII., p. 416), the victory at Edington (Athendune), the fact of the capture of royal prisoners,

¹⁾ Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. pp. 122, 124. Also Asser, p. 470, a, c.

²⁾ A.-S. Chron. I. p. 124.

the conversion of the Danes, and the signing of a treaty that gave Guthrum the North-West of England, — all these events are of course historic.¹⁾ But Blackmore makes the prisoners a wife and daughter of Guthrum instead of the wife and children of Hastings, taken under quite different circumstances,²⁾ and the treaty is made at Cunetio, or Marlborough, instead of Wedmore. The story of Alfred's visit to the Danish camp is noticed on page 8 of this dissertation. The details of the battle are simply bold invention.

To apply the historic test to the events of the first eleven books not directly concerning Alfred is no part of our present task. On their general probability, however, it may be remarked that very few of them are either in outline or in detail conceivable. Northern Africa, at the time of Alfred's visit, would have been a desolate country ravaged by Arab hordes. Sicily was rent from end to end with the struggle between Christians and Moslems. Navarre had recently become independent indeed, but the court intrigues supposed by Blackmore are hard to conceive in that country at that age. Details built on such a groundwork are not worth consideration. As would be expected, there are also many historical errors. To mention those of event, such as Alfred's marriage with a Danish princess, etc., would be an endless task. The errors of name are almost as multitudinous. For example, the term Cimbrian is used nineteen times for Dane, Finlander is equivalent to Goth, Saxon to Briton.

The characters of Blackmore's poem when collected make a very large *dramatis personae*. The only historical personages, however, are Alfred himself, his father Æthelwolf,³⁾ called Atulpo, his brothers Æthelbald,⁴⁾ called Ethelbal, and Æthelred.⁵⁾ The Danish king Guthrum,⁶⁾ called Gunter, the Danish chief Hubba,⁷⁾ and the pope Leo.⁸⁾ Perhaps, too, Elsitha is adapted from Ealhswith,⁹⁾ Alfred's wife. In the multitude of fictitious foreign nobility, the poet has hit upon the name of one actual person,

¹⁾ Ibid., I. p. 148.

²⁾ A.-S. Chron., ed. Thorpe, I. p. 168.

³⁾ Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 140.

⁴⁾ Ibid., I. p. 128.

⁵⁾ Ibid., I. p. 132.

⁶⁾ Ibid., I. p. 144.

⁷⁾ Ibid., I. p. 135, Cott. Domit. A. VIII.

⁸⁾ Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 124.

⁹⁾ Page 34 of this dissertation.

Garcio, ¹⁾ king of Navarre, who reigned from 905 to 925. We might mention Lucifer, too, as a name not altogether foreign to our ears. These seem to be all of the 136 active characters that can claim any connexion with history. Many of the warriors slain in battle are introduced by name to satisfy that painful sense for exactness which induces the poet to give us the menu of every banquet he has occasion to mention. To look for possible suggestions of these people among historic characters would be a fruitless task.

2.

The next work to be considered here is entitled, "Alfred: a Masque," and is contained in the third volume of "The Works of David Mallet Esq. a New Edition corrected. London: Printed for A. Miller, in the Strand. 1759." The advertisement reads as follows: "The first draught of this poem was written for the Lady Augusta's birth-day, by command of the Prince of Wales: and acted twice, before his Royal Highness, in the garden of Clifden. Mr. Thomson was joined with me in writing that sketch. But when, several years after, I thought of fitting it for a public theatre, I found it would be necessary to enlarge the design; or rather to plan the whole anew, as well as write most of the particular scenes over again; and make Alfred, what he should have been at first, the principal figure in his own Masque," etc.

Prof. Richard Wülker in his "Geschichte der Englischen Literatur," writes regarding the original poem as follows: "*'Alfred' wurde der nationalen Gesinnung, die es zum Ausdruck brachte, und besonders eines eingeschalteten Liedes wegen mit lebhaftem Beifall aufgenommen.*" ²⁾ The ode here referred to is the still famous "Rule Britannia" (act. III. sc. 10) and is undoubtedly due to Thomson. ³⁾ And besides this ode, the song "To Peace" occurring in the masque at act I. sc. 1., one on "Contentment" (act. II. sc. 1.), "Alfred Father of the State" (act I. sc. 2), and others are to be found in all authorised editions of Thomson's works. ⁴⁾ While, therefore, our thanks are due to Mallet for the

¹⁾ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XXII., pp. 311, 312.

²⁾ Page 413.

³⁾ Compare pp. 146—47 of this dissertation.

⁴⁾ See Tauchnitz Collection of British Authors, vol. 279, pp. 264—5.

present form of the drama, yet the parts that have best maintained their place in current literature come from Thomson's pen.

Regarding the first production of the masque, Prof. Wülker continues as follows: " 'Alfred' wurde 1740 vor dem Prinzen und Prinzessin von Wales auf der Bühne gegeben, zu einer Zeit, wo ein Seekrieg gegen Spanien geführt wurde. Bei Jamaica war gerade damals eine grosse Englische Flotte von 115 Schiffen mit 15 000 Matrosen und 12 000 Soldaten versammelt worden, eine andere rüstete sich zu einem Angriff auf Peru. Wenn nachher beide Unternehmungen auch recht kläglich verliefen, so war gerade im August, wo 'Alfred' aufgeführt wurde, der Stolz Englands auf seine Seemacht aufs höchste gestiegen: man hätte keine günstigere Zeit für ein Stück wählen können, das Englands Seeherrschaft verherrlichte." ¹⁾ These facts enable us to account in the poem for much that would otherwise seem to cater to the national pride beyond the limits of good taste. For, dealing with but few historic events, it employs them only as a general groundwork. The details, on the other hand, are chosen with the evident idea of extolling through King Alfred and his deeds, as example, the typical English gentleman and English institutions.

The masque ²⁾ opens with a prologue in praise of Alfred and as usual asking the indulgence of the audience.

The first of the three acts is introduced by the song of a shepherdess to peace. Then in a dialogue, Corin and Emma express their wonderment over the noble stranger that has sought shelter in their humble cabin, and they sympathise with his hard lot. A second shepherdess, advancing, laments in song the death of her brave young lover. — In the second scene the earl of Devon tells Alfred of the pitiful condition of the country; and the latter determines, in spite of despair, to make another attempt at rescue. — Edwin tells in the third scene how the Saxon courage still lives, and twelve hundred warriors are assembled, waiting for their leader. Alfred thereupon dispatches Devon to take command of the castle near Kenwith (?) forest. — In the

¹⁾ Gesch. d. Eng. Lit., p. 413.

²⁾ The term "masque" is by no means a fixed quantity in English literature. The Encyclopaedia Britannica very conveniently defines it as an "elastic kind of composition, mixing in varying proportions its constituent elements of declamation and dialogue, music and dancing, decoration and scenery." The relative quantities of these elements in the piece under consideration will be evident from the following pages.

next three scenes spirits approach, sing to Alfred, father of the state, and depart; and Alfred marvels on the gracious conference. — The seventh scene presents a consultation between Alfred and the hermit. The latter describes his vision of the future greatness of England and warns Alfred, should Heaven choose him as liberator of the country, to have ever in remembrance his days of affliction and be the patron of virtue. Spirits sing of the joys of service, and Alfred pronounces anathemas on those who would in such a case be unfaithful.

The first scene of the second act consists chiefly of the song of a shepherdess in praise of the shepherd's life. — In scene 2 Corin brings to his companions the joyful news that the king is among them. An unseen person, evidently Alfred's wife, sings a love-song. — In the third scene, between Alfred and the hermit, the king sees a vision. — Corin enters in the fourth, acknowledges his king, and tells him of the approach of some Danes. — The Danes pass in the fifth scene. They are evidently in search of prey, and boast that England is no more. — In scene 6 Corin and Alfred reappear. — In scene 7 Emma rushes in in fright, followed in the eighth by Alfred and Corin, supporting a lady they have rescued. The lady proves to be Alfred's wife. Tender greetings follow and the children are brought in. — In scene 9 the hermit reminds Alfred that his first duty is to the state, and the king commits to the hermit his children to be educated. Edwin now brings tidings that all is ready for the planned assault, and Alfred bids farewell to his wife Eltruda.

As Act III. opens, Emma and Edith are guarding the cottage where they suppose the queen to be sleeping. Edith sings. — In scene 2, however, Eltruda enters, and prays the guardian saints to shield her husband in battle. — In scene 3 an attendant enters, but brings no news. — In scene 4, it is thought the Danes are approaching, and Emma, Eltruda, and other women implore Heaven for mercy. — In scene 5 the hermit announces victory; and a spirit disclosed by the breaking clouds, sings an ode of glad tidings and triumph. — In the sixth scene Devon gives an account of the battle and how the Danish monarch is taken. Spirits sing. — Scene 7 presents the triumphal procession. — In 8 Alfred is welcomed. In a pantomime, furies threaten his life; but they are driven away by the genius of England. — Scene 9

is between Alfred and the Danish king. The latter tells of his chagrin in having been taken captive, and learns of the death of his son.

Alfred seeks to convert the Dane. — In 10, Alfred announces to the hermit his purpose of walling England round with “well-appointed fleets”, and receives encouragement from the hermit. Ships are seen in pantomime, and a bard sings the now famous ode, “Rule Britannia.” Alfred asks Heaven’s blessing on his further labours.

The epilogue, after a humourous opening, discloses a peaceful rural scene. In this, first a husbandman and wife and family sing of the blessings of peace; then a pair of shepherd lovers are reunited; and lastly two soldiers sing of the glory of England and the valour of their king.

As far as the *dramatis personae* is concerned, the succession of events, and the compass of time in which all occurs, Mallet ¹⁾ has taken many liberties with history. His chief characters show his attempt to picture true to life, though they are so warped to fit the plot that the picture is incomplete. The general trend of the events in which they play is real, but the majority of the details are pure invention.

Among the *dramatis personae*, Alfred’s is the only historic name. The earl of Devon, by whom is evidently meant the ealdorman of Devonshire, when we consider that Alfred’s refuge of Athelnay lay near ²⁾ that shire, is not an unlikely personage. Who Edwin could have been is open to conjecture. The hermit is also not unlikely, and may very appropriately have been intended for St. Neot. ³⁾ The names of Emma and Corin are fictitious, and the persons themselves correspond ill with the legend. ⁴⁾ If we overlook many divergencies from history in the action of the nameless Danish king, particularly his sullen behaviour in resisting Alfred’s attempts at conversion, he may be considered to represent Guthrum. The hero’s wife, as pictured to us, is also possible; but as in the case of Alfred, certain traits are developed so dis-

¹⁾ As Mallet’s name is the only one appearing on the title-page of the edition before us, we therefore, for the sake of brevity, usually refer to the piece as his, understanding thereby Thomson as well.

²⁾ Pauli, p. 135.

^{3, 4)} Dissertation, p. 5.

proportionately that the picture is warped. Where the author found the name Eltruda is a mystery.

Of the events, Alfred's tarrying in concealment among the peasants,¹⁾ still surrounded by a few faithful followers,²⁾ the assembling of the English forces upon his making himself known again to his subjects,³⁾ the battle and victory and the surrender of the Danish king,⁴⁾ the consultation with wise men at all times, the determination to insure further protection through a fleet — all these are, in their essential features, historical events. Their details and the remaining circumstances and occurrences are pure invention. One marked difference between the spirit of this poem and those that succeed it is the way in which the author seems to gloat over the misfortunes of the Danish king. He makes them severer than they were. History does not record the killing of Guthrum's son; and the conversion of the Danes to Christianity, which it does record, is omitted from the poem. Can these features be a result of the general spirit that prompted the composition of the work? Another peculiarity is the great respect shown to Alfred by the peasants with whom he sojourns. Neither is he made to work for his support, nor is the legend of the cakes related.

3.

The next work to be considered here bears a title-page that reads as follows: "Alfred the Great in Athelnay. An Historical Play. with a preliminary scene, by Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, London: Bernard Quaritch, 15 Picadilly, 1876." There were issued of this work only "250 copies on Small Paper, and 25 copies on Large Paper," and it is to-day not easy to obtain.⁵⁾ It is inscribed in dedication to the memory of Prince Albert, and the accompanying eulogistic stanza closes —

"Oh! had thy star prevailed o'er Fate's decree,
Another Alfred would have lived in thee!"

The play is in five acts with a preliminary scene. This scene

^{1, 2)} Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 146. — Asser in Mon. Hist. Brit., p. 480 b.

^{3, 4)} A.-S. Chron., I. p. 148.

⁵⁾ A copy of this work may be seen in the library of the English seminar of the University of Leipzig.

is laid in the palace of Ragnor Lodbrug in Scandinavia. There the three daughters of Ragnor learn from a veteran earl the sad story of their father's cruel death by poisonous adders in a Northumbrian prison. Burning for revenge, they urge their kinsman to speed the new expedition against England, and then, chanting together, they weave the much dreaded raven-standard of the Norsemen.

Scene 1. of act I. is laid "before the royal residence." There Cedric and other Saxon yeomen complain of their sufferings from the Danes and of the lethargy of the king. — Scene 2 takes place between the seneschal and the king's valet in the palace. The seneschal tells of Alfred's sudden illness at the time of his marriage and expresses fears for his master's present health. He is reassured by the valet. The populace is heard assembling without. — Scene 3. The deputies of the people petition for leadership against the Danes. Ethelwolf, Ealderman of the Palace, pleads in defence of Alfred's prudent delay. — Scene 4. His reply, conveyed back to the people by Cedric, is received with shouts of derision. At the advance of the royal guard, the populace disperse. — Scene 5. Earl Ordolf and Thane Godwin hold a discussion in which the earl shows himself in favour of the choice of a new ruler, one of Alfred's nephews, but the thane defends the king. — Scene 6. The king appears in his private apartment. He is full of misgivings from his own indecision and the weakness of his subjects. Bishop Neot, the Cornish prelate, is received. He upbraids the king for his apathy, and hints at witchcraft as the cause. Alfred is at first offended, but finally bows to the rebuke of heaven's deputy.

In the first scene of Act II. we see Wolfrida, the Danish sorceress, in her cave. She sings of the wild, happy days of her childhood. Hilda, a girl of Saxon-Danish parentage and Cedric's bride, visits her, and tells her of the disaffection between Alfred and his people. Wolfrida expresses much tender feeling for Hilda. After the girl's departure, Guthrun, the Danish king, consults the sorceress. Her advice is that he bide his time. — Scene 2 is laid in a village street. Saxon girls are engaged in washing by a fountain. They find recreation from their labour in a love-song. Cedric passes with a word of commendation and encouragement. — In scene 3, the queen and royal children appear

in a room in the palace. The queen laments the sad reverse in her lord and his fortunes. Alfred, entering, finds all in tears. Being finally left alone, the king reviews the whole matter, and decides to seek the needed strength for himself, and to win back his subjects from their estrangement, by a season of secret retirement. — In scene 4 clerks are copying writs for the assembling of the witan. Their lack of education is apparent. — In scene 5 the valet announces to the seneschal the king's sudden disappearance. The palace porter also relates that a stranger passed through the gates on the preceding evening. — Scene 6 presents a council chamber. The queen in tears appeals to Ordolf. That earl again hints at the choice of a successor. Thane Godwyn, however, counsels delay. He believes Alfred still lives. And the queen sides with Godwyn. — Scene 7. Ordolf and his foster-brother lay plots for the succession of one of Alfred's nephews.

Act III. scene 1. — "A forest with water and a small boat." Alfred is conveyed across to the island — Athelnay — by a boatman, and learns by the way that its sole inhabitants are a swineherd and his termigant wife — Danulf and Githra. — Scene 2. Githra answers brusquely Alfred's appeal for aid, but she finally allows him to rest until her husband's return. Both husband and wife are in favour of engaging the comely youth in their service. — Scene 3 is laid in Guthrun's palace. The king tells of Alfred's disappearance and seeks counsel. Helmstes is for immediate hostilities. Sigard, however, favours delay, as the Saxons, disheartened by the loss of their chief, become daily weaker. Wolfrida enters here to report that treason has made its appearance among Alfred's subjects. Guthrun determines to bide his time. — Scene 4. Danulf's cottage. — The swineherd tells his wife the news regarding Alfred's disappearance. The new hireling is set to turning cakes before the fire. He falls asleep over his unwelcome task, and the cake is burnt. He is roused by a smart box on the ear from Githra, whereupon the swineherd pays his wife a like compliment. — Scene 5. In Wolfrida's cave the sorceress tells Hilda of the storms of war that are brewing, much to the young bride's consternation. Guthrun now entering espies Hilda. He evidently much admires the girl, who modestly takes her leave. Guthrun learns from Wolfrida that Alfred still lives. On

hearing cries of a woman from the forest, the Danish king rushes out. — Scene 6. Hilda, in possession of a riotous company of young Danes, pleads for her maidenhood. Guthrun rescues her. Cedric appearing claims his bride. Guthrun magnanimously refuses the thanks of both. When left alone, he gives vent to his admiration of the girl. — In scene 7 in Ordolf's house, the foster-brother reports the progress of their plot. The prince is willing to be its object, but he hesitates to take the decisive step. As the foster-brother takes his leave, Godwyn enters. Again Ordolf pleads for a successor to the vacant throne, and again the thane is staunch in his fidelity to Alfred. He leaves the earl with his warning.

In the first scene of act IV., Cedric exposes his personal grievances and those of the state, and seeks through Godwyn the audience of the queen. In scene 2, the queen, being appealed to, sees in phantom by the power of love and memory the place of her lord's retreat. Cedric, before his departure in search of Alfred, tells how Hilda, his betrothed, "writhes within the net of Guthrun". He demands revenge, and solicits for Hilda the protection of the court. In scene 3, the boatman conveys Cedric to Athelnay, and by the way tells the yeoman of his belief that the object of search is not far distant. Cedric finds and recognises his king. Alfred proposes his readiness to return to his subjects. — Scene 4 is laid in Guthrun's palace. The Danish king tries to force Hilda, but he is "abashed by her maiden virtue." Wolfrida finally obtains entrance and rescues the girl. — In scene 5, Ordolf and his foster-brother are surprised in Ordolf's house and put under arrest. — In scene 6, Cedric announces to the queen, Godwyn, and Godwyn's lady the success of his search. — Scene 7. Danulf's cottage. Cedric brings word to Alfred that all his earls but the traitor Ordolf stand awaiting his commands, and that the troops are in readiness. Alfred announces his purpose to visit the Danish camp disguised as a minstrel. He obtains from the swineherd and his wife the needed harp and cloak, which happen to have been left in their possession.

In scene 1. of act V. Alfred is welcomed in the Danish camp. His song in praise of the northern chiefs calls forth such loud commendation that Guthrun appears. He too is charmed by the minstrel, and offers him a free inspection of the camp. — In

scene 2 Alfred, having returned to Athelnay, commends Cedric and welcomes Godwyn, Ordolf, whom he forgives, and other nobles and commanders. He discloses his plan for a sudden attack on the foe. — In scene 3 Danulf and Githra, having discovered who their guest is, implore forgiveness. Alfred is gracious to Danulf; toward the wife he shows great sternness, which turns out to be only in sport. Being left alone, overcome by the long strain of excitement, he falls asleep. The ghost of St. Cuthbert appears to him to foretell success. — Scene 4 is on the battlefield. A camp is seen in the background. Guthrun marshals his host. In another part of the field Alfred addresses his troops. Later and in still another part, Helmster enters with soldiers and Saxon prisoners. He bids the latter be slain. Cedric enters to him. They fight, and the Dane is wounded. — Exeunt. — Ordolf comes in, his sword red with blood. He has fought nobly. Wolfrida enters, and strikes him down. Mortally wounded in her turn by the foster-brother, she expires, rejoicing in the pride of her race. Alfred and guards now enter in triumph, bearing the Danish standard. The king discovers the corpses of Ordolf and the sorceress. Both Godwyn and Cedric praise Ordolf's conduct in the fight, and the king bids that the bodies be shown respect. — Scene 5. Saxon encampment before the Danish fortress. Soldiers on guard discuss the progress of the war. Enter Alfred and Godwyn. The king is in favour of peace: the thane distrusts the Norsemen. Cedric enters to announce that the Danes call a parley. — Scene 6. King Alfred's tent. Alfred and Guthrun, each surrounded by a numerous guard, confess mutual trust, and the councillors and guard withdraw, leaving Guthrun and Alfred to arrange terms of peace. If the Danes would accept the Christian faith, matters would be much facilitated. — Scene 7. Cedric and Hilda in a grove by moonlight rejoice in peace restored and love unbroken. Villagers of both sexes enter, and there is merrymaking. — Scene 8. A hall in Alfred's palace. Alfred and queen Elswitha, once more united, preside over the court. Godwyn is created earl and Cedric advanced to thane. Danulf receives his thanks. The archbishop and other dignitaries proclaim allegiance. Crowds of the populace follow their example. Guthrun takes a deferential leave, and promises to strive to unite Saxon and Dane. Alfred, prophetically foreseeing the greatness of

England, bids Godwyn assist him to lay the foundations therefore, and recommends Asser as a helpmate. Learning chiefly is needed; fleets are also wanted; law and order must reign. — Scene 9. Nave of a Saxon church. A sacristan and verger agree on the folly of baptizing the Danes, but that the sight, never-the-less, will be a brave one. Guthrun will not appear. The act closes with a hymn sung by responsive choirs.

As the name of the play implies, the whole plot is, like Mallet's, made to center around Alfred's concealment in Athelnay. But in historic accuracy, Redcliffe far excells Mallet. In the first place, the dramatis personae contains a larger percentage of historic characters. Alfred, Guthrun, Neot, St. Cuthbert belong to this number, Godwyn too is an historic name, but the present character is either an invention of the poet, or he has chosen to commit an anachronism of over a century. According to Florence of Worcester, the name of the hospitable peasant with whom Alfred found shelter was Danulf or Denulf.¹⁾ The name of Alfred's wife is not given by Asser, but the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions her twice, under the years 903 and 905,²⁾ and there the name is Ealhswith. William of Malmesbury calls her Egelswitha,³⁾ which is the same as Aethelswitha. This is not far removed from Redcliffe's Elwitha. The name of the Danish chief Helmster seems to be an invention. Florence of Worcester mentions a Helmster,⁴⁾ but he was bishop of Winton. The other characters bearing names, — Ethelwolf, Ordolf, Cedric, Githra, Wolfrida, Hilda, — are to be considered pure invention, although they are, to be sure, likely personages, and Githra corresponds to the peasant-woman of the legend.

In the preliminary scene, Ragnor Lodbrug, although perhaps not an historical character, is at least claimed by ancient legend. His manner of death, as given by Redcliffe, corresponds with the

1) Thorpe's edition, Vol. I p. 97. — "Defuncto Dunberhto Wintoniensi episcopo, successit Denewulf. . . . Eum rex Aelfredus, hostium violentiae cedens, et in sylvam profugus, casu sues pascentem offendit."

2) Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. pp. 180, 182.

3) Gesta Regum Anglorum, ed. Hardy, I. p. 185.

4) Thorte's Flor. Wigor. I. p. 69.

account in the "Quida," or death-song, attributed to him.¹⁾ It were, perhaps, in better accord with legend to make the veteran earl the traitor Bjorn Butsecarl.²⁾ The story of the weaving of the raven-standard is given in the "Chronologia Rerum Septentrionalium" as follows: "*In quo etiam acceperunt illud Vexillum, quod Reafan nominant; dicunt enim, quod tres sorores Hungari et Habbae filiae videlicet Lodebrochi, illud Vexillum texuerunt, et totum paraverunt illud uno meridiano tempore.*" etc.³⁾

As regards the action of the play itself, the doings of the truly historic characters are in their main features in accordance with written record of actual events or with long-accepted legend. Some of the details, however, are not in accordance with history; and others seem quite impossible. —

The cause of the estrangement of Alfred's subjects and his purpose in concealment, as suggested in the poem, seem not altogether unlikely or at variance with the times or character of the king. But in the light of Turner's investigation⁴⁾ other explanation seems just as probable. As regards the insurrection, which plays so large a part in Redcliffe's plot, there is a suggestion of such trouble in the words of Werefrith under the year 886. — "*Interea obsidetur a rege Aelfredo urbs Lundonia: et quem ingenio, quem occursa non superaverat civilis discordia saeva, hunc ut redemptorem susceperere cuncti, et maxime genus Saxonum,*" etc.⁵⁾ Be these things as they may, the retirement to the marshes of Somerset remains a historic fact. According to Redcliffe, however, Alfred went unattended; but Asser, on the other hand, makes reference distinctly to certain companions — "*cum paucis suis nobilibus, et etiam cum quibusdam militibus.*"⁶⁾ — Further, this retreat is supposed by historians to have taken place in winter;⁷⁾ but according to act II. scene 2 and act III. scene 2, our poet imagines it to have been in summer. In the

¹⁾ Turner's Hist. of the A.-S. II., p. 280 note, and pp. 284—6 for a translation.

²⁾ Lappenberg's Gesch. v. England, I., pp. 300—1, and his authorities, Geffrei Gaimar, vs 2590 etc. Mon. Hist. Brit. p. 795; Matthew of Westmin., Flores Historiarum, ed. Luard pp. 435—6.

³⁾ Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, J. Langebek, Haunia, 1783. Tom. V. p. 95.

⁴⁾ Hist. of the A.-S., I. pp. 322 f.

⁵⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit. p. 517 a.

⁶⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit. I. p. 480 b.

⁷⁾ Turner, Vol. I. p. 322 f.

story of the house-wife and the cakes, the original does not say, as here, that Alfred fell asleep. According to Bishop Parker's edition of Asser, he was making ready his bow and arrows — "*et ille rex sedens sic circa focum praeeparavit sibi arcum et sagittas, et alia bellorum instrumenta.*"¹⁾ — The Anglo-Saxon life of Neot says, "*and se king þser-big sæt hleowinde hine beo þan fyre.*"²⁾ The Latin life of the abbot of Croyland³⁾ implies that the king was lost in thought, and the account in Matthew of Westminster does not say how he was engaged. Again, the chidings of Bishop Neot are much milder in Redcliffe than in the ancient author. So too Guthrun and the Danes are presented as possessed of a degree of chivalry and fidelity that they are known not to have manifested. And this too, in spite of the fact that the author refers to the Danes in his prefatory notice as those "whose cruel natures had not yet been softened by Christianity." When Guthrun frees Hilda from the hands of his rough soldiers, his magnanimous behaviour toward her and Cedric is quite remarkable. Later, the courtesy by which he voluntarily throws open his camp for inspection to an unknown harper is quite impossible. Wolfrida is also far too refined for a Danish sorceress of the tenth century. And it is unlikely that the hag would be supported by "a hundred Danes" when she comes to rescue Hilda (IV. 4). Further, the Danes and Saxons are brought in too close proximity for the cessation of hostilities to be maintained. A particularly weak point in the plot too is the manner in which the queen, as if by clairvoyance, describes the place of Alfred's concealment. The apparition of St. Cuthbert to Alfred in sleep is based on legend; but the story of the draught of fishes by which Alfred was to be assured of the genuineness of the apparition is omitted. Finally, the absence of Guthrum from the ceremonies that close the play leaves the great culmination of Alfred's victory to be supplied in part by our imagination. According to history, Guthrum was baptized with his chieftains, and spent twelve days as Alfred's guest.⁴⁾ The character of the English hero himself we consider at length elsewhere.

1) Mon. Hist. Brit. I. p. 480 c.

2) Anglia, Vol. III. p. 112, Prof. Wülker's Ags. Leben des Neot.

3) See page 4 of this dissertation, and Turner I., p. 331.

4) Thorpe's A.-S. Chron. I., p. 148.

4. by Alfred Austin.

The last work to be treated of here is "England's Darling" by Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate, printed by Macmillan Co., London and New-York, 1896. Mr. Austin's beautiful and interesting preface evinces so genuine a love for his hero and his subject that the appearance of his work is easily accounted for. The vast superiority of this poem to all those thus far noticed, not only for fidelity to history but also for aesthetic worth, will be apparent as we proceed.

The drama opens with a scene in "the Saxon Fastness in Athelney". The Archbishop of Canterbury, the ealdorman of Somerset, Werfrith of Worcester, Werewulf, and Ethelred, Alfred's son-in-law, discuss the ill times in England. Buhred has fled from Mercia to Rome; and his wife, Alfred's sister, has followed her luckless husband as far as Padua. News as dark about the ravages of the Danes under Halfdene comes from Northumbria. Hingvar and Hubba are plundering in East Anglia and destroying the monasteries — Ely, Croyland, Bardeney, Peterborough. They enserf "all but Alfred the king."¹⁾ In his wisdom, the bravery of such as Ethelred, and the piety of a Plegmund, there is hope for England. — In the second scene, which is laid in the forest, Edward is singing to his love, when he is disturbed by the approach of his father in disguise. After the king has passed by, the youth continues his work of weaving a flower-necklace for the Danish girl Edgiva. Then follows a pretty scene in which the girl begs her lover's name and tells the story of how she was discovered as a foundling, evidently of royal birth. She suffers Edward to adorn her with his gaily wrought necklace. To silence her thoughts of her unworthiness, Edward pronounces a eulogy on menial labor that reflects strongly the spirit of his father. Edgiva invites him to her home. No one is there to see them but an old wanderer. — The third scene is laid in Danewulf's hut. Alfred is seated by the fire, conning a rude map of England and writing in his chronicle. Edgiva and Edward approach. The girl entering finds her mother upbraiding Alfred for letting the cakes burn, and takes her to task for it, calling her attention

¹⁾ "butan þan cyninge Aelfrede". — Dissertation, p. 2.

to the stranger's age and scholarly mein. The king, however, acknowledges his fault. Then in a pretty scene between Edgiva and Alfred, in which she expresses her longing to be "bookish" like him and he promises her instruction, he seals their friendship with the gift of the famous jewel. They leave the hut, Edward and Edgiva run to play in the forest, while Alfred, musing on the "unkingly boy", takes his solitary way to the Witan at Athelnay. Edgiva shows Edward the jewel, and tells of the interview with Alfred. Edward, with many pretty figures drawn from nature, gives and receives new vows of love, and with plighted troth takes leave of the brave little woman.

The second act opens with preparations for Alfred's camp. The peasants sing a rollicking song at their labor. The king comes in in disguise, and being bidden, puts his own shoulder to the load, not without arousing admiration. — The second scene presents a conversation among the ealdorman Ethelnoth, Archbishop Plegmund, Ethelred, and Alfred before the assembling of the Witan. Alfred is welcomed back to public life, and refers to his plans, after the final subjugation of the Danes, for the intellectual advance of England. Werefrith is to revise Pope Gregory's "Pastoral Care", and Alfred must record himself the voyages of Wulfstan and Othere in his Orosius. He commits to Plegmund the rendering of Boethius' "Consolations of Philosophy". — Scene 3 presents the Witanagemot. Alfred, seated on a throne, is surrounded by the distinguished men and women of his realm and by the various classes of his people. The conversation of some freemen voices the justice, wisdom, mildness, rigor, learning, skill, bravery of their king. Alfred in his opening speech declares his never-shaken purpose to win back England, and asks whether the land shall be theirs or Guthrum's. They answer heartily as those that have stood by him at Ashdune. Although the Danes have played false, says Alfred, it would not be Christian to slay the hostages. Amid assent of clashing spears, the king arms the serfs and bids even the monks take sword. The women must now be the prayers, and he bids his wife erect a nunnery at Shaftsbury and bequeathes to her also Wantage and Athelney. Here the women depart. Asser arrives with an embassy composed of the sons of King Mouric, Tendyr, Hemrid, Ris, from Demetria, who come to beg assistance against the Welsh. Alfred bids them

welcome and requests Asser to teach them the laws and speech of Wessex. All those that wish to claim their privilege of returning home after their half-year of service are now at liberty to go; but all decide to stay to continue the fight under their king. They hail him their lord and comfort, etc. — Scene 4. discloses Alfred in his study, shaping models of boats. Edward comes to him and is requested to give an account of his doings. He owns his love for Edgiva, is commended for his honesty, but is warned to be wary of lust, as his father was in his youth, when he prayed heaven for a scourge as protection. Again Edward avows his love; and Alfred, although acceding to his son's choice, chides him for giving thought to love in the troublous times. Just then a messenger announces the capture of a Danish girl, and Edgiva is brought in. Edward is dismissed. Then for the first time, the girl learns the rank of her lover, pleads her innocence of vain aspiration, and begs to be allowed to return home. Alfred, however, reassures her, reveals himself as the wandering scholar whom she is seeking and whose jewel she has lost by the way, and sends her to be housed for the night with the queen's handmaidens.

The third act opens with a scene in the fens north-east of Athelnay. Edgiva and Edward are in a boat, making to a place whence it has been agreed the girl shall set out with Alfred for the Danish camp. Her heart is full of misgivings, but she is reassured by her lover. In the second scene Alfred gives his son instructions about an attack on Guthrum's camp, which is to be made three days afterward, while the king is still there disguised as a minstrel. In scene 3, Edward takes short leave of his love. In scene 4, Alfred and Edgiva are together in Selwood Forest. Edgiva has had a reading lesson; and now as they wander on, she asks of Rome. Then the talk turns to the flowers; and the girl mentions many simple remedies, in which Alfred shows great interest. In scene 5, night is approaching. Edgiva lies down under a great yew-tree, and Alfred muses a while on the many hands it takes to arm a state.

The fourth act presents the camp of the Danes. Oskytel and Guthrum boast of the spoils of war. The jarls, however, will not drink with their chief, because of the evil omens shown by the staves strewn on a cloth, by the white steeds, and by the

Shieldmaidens. But they finally remember their vows to their chief, and then a wandering minstrel is announced. Alfred and Edgiva enter, and the English king sings of the creation. The Danes are well pleased with his song, and name him a seer. He then sings of the glory of England. His song calls forth their question, "who shall have this England?" but he continues in the same strain, delaying the answer. A horn is heard without; and as the Saxons¹⁾ under Edward, Ethelred, and Ethelnoth rush in, Alfred throws off his disguise, and the camp is taken. Edward announces the victory at Ethandune. Alfred magnanimously spares the life of the perjured Guthrum, and the Dane is won over to Christ and given East-Anglia to rule. At the same time, Ethelnoth is bidden to rebuild London,²⁾ Werefrith and Plegmund to "renew God's house at Winchester,"³⁾ Oskytel recognizes Edgina as Sweyn's daughter, lost after the battle of the white Horse. Alfred gives her to his son to wife. Here Ethelred, bursting in, adds to the measure of happiness by the announcement of a victory of Alfred's fleet at Swanage. Alfred expresses more joy at the naval victory than at the other, and foretells the future greatness of the kingdom upon the sea. All hail Alfred as England's comfort, shepherd, oarsman, darling.

One great difference between Mr. Austin's treatment of his theme and the works of his predecessors lies in the greater richness and historic value of his events and characters. True, there are in the main plot one inconsistency with legend and one great improbability. — First, Alfred returned from his visit to the Danish camp himself to lead his troops in the battle of Ethandune.⁴⁾ Secondly, would he likely have been accompanied on his expedition of reconnaissance by a woman? — Yet in spite of these glaring divergencies and some smaller inaccuracies, the historic events and references far outnumber those of the other poems under discussion; and the author's words in his preface are correct. — "For every incident in the following poem there is a foundation, however slight, in written record or in oral

¹⁾ For Anglo-Saxons, Mr. Austin uses the more poetic name Saxons.

²⁾ Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 156, yr. 886.

³⁾ Ibid, I. p. 181, Cott. Domit. A. VIII.

⁴⁾ See page 8 of this dissertation.

hearsay, not only concerning Alfred himself, but equally as regards his brilliant son."

The *dramatis personae* has good historic or legendary basis. Of the various spellings given the name of Alfred's wife by the historians,¹⁾ Austin has chosen Aethelswitha, and calls her Ethelswith. Edgiva comes from William of Malmesbury's "*Gesta Regum Anglorum*," where the name is Egwinna.²⁾ The name of the girl's foster-father, Danewulf, is adopted from another legend noticed on page 34 of this dissertation. Werewulf appears but once (I. I, p. 2), and may be the priest mentioned by Asser on page 487 a. The other characters — Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury,³⁾ Werefrith, bishop of Worcester,⁴⁾ Ethelred, Alfred's son-in-law, ealdorman of Mercia,⁵⁾ Ethelnoth, ealdorman of Somerset,⁶⁾ Asser, the biographer,⁷⁾ Edward, Alfred's son,⁸⁾ Ethelfrida, his daughter and wife of Ethelred,⁹⁾ Oskytel¹⁰⁾ and Guthrum,¹¹⁾ and those characters silent on the stage and others not appearing, but simply referred to; e. g., Wereheard,¹²⁾ Othere,¹³⁾ Barsac,¹⁴⁾ Osbern,¹⁵⁾ Harold,¹⁶⁾ Frene,¹⁷⁾ the two Sidracs,¹⁸⁾ Hinguar,¹⁹⁾ Hubba,²⁰⁾ the daughters of Ragnar Ludbrog,²¹⁾ Osberht the Northumbrian,²²⁾ Bjorn Butsecarl,²³⁾ the sons of Moudric, Tendyr, Hemrid, Ris,²⁴⁾ and others more widely known — all these are not only in name but essentially in character true to history or ancient legend.

For the main movement of his plot, the poet has made a happy combination of three legends. The first, Alfred's concealment among the peasants, is similarly employed by Mallet and

1) See p. 34 of this dissertation.

2) Liber II. §. 126, Hardy's edition, Vol. I. p. 197.

3) Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 160, year 890.

4) Asser in Mon. Hist. Brit. I. p. 486 c.

5) Ibid., p. 485 c.

6) Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 168, year 894.

7) Dissertation, p. 5.

8) Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 178.

9) Asser, p. 485 c.

10, 11) A.-S. Chron., I. p. 144.

12) A.-S. Chron., Thorpe, I. p. 110.

13) Ibid, I. p. 184.

14, 15, 16, 17, 18) Asser, p. 477 a—b; also Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I, p. 138.

19, 20) A.-S. Chron., I. p. 135. Cott. Domit. A. VIII. — Also Asser 481 c.

21) Asser, p. 481 c.

22) A.-S. Chron., I. p. 132.

23) Geoffrei Gaimar in Mon. Hist. Brit. p. 795, verse 2598.

24) Asser, p. 488 b.

Redcliffe. The second relates to Edward's wooing. In a letter from Mr. Austin, courteously given at the request of the present writer, the poet states that the germ of this part of his work lies in the following words of Pauli and their source in William of Malmesbury. — "*Eadweard als Aetheling, heisst es, sei über Land geritten und in der Hütte eines Schäfers eingekehrt, wo ihn Ecgwyn, die Tochter desselben, der bereits ein Traumgesicht¹⁾ ihre hohe Zukunft voraus verkündet, durch ihre Schönheit gefesselt habe.²⁾ Von ihr, die vielleicht von höherer als bäuerlicher,³⁾ aber sicher nicht von ebenbürtiger Abkunft war, wurde ihm Aethelstan sowie eine Tochter geboren.*" (pp. 285—6). In the same letter Mr. Austin says, "William of Malmesbury narrates that Alfred visited the Danish camp in disguise, accompanied by a faithful attendant."⁴⁾ Through the person of Edgiva these three legends have been woven into one. The other main events of the plot rest on historic basis — the calling of the Witanagemot,⁵⁾ Alfred's reception by his people,⁶⁾ his organization of his army with definite periods of service,⁷⁾ his concourse with learned men,⁸⁾ his reception of the embassy of the Celts,⁹⁾ the success of the fleet,¹⁰⁾ the victory at Ethandune and the treaty with Guthrum.¹¹⁾ In placing the victory just at the time of Alfred's visit to the Danish camp, the poet has taken liberties with both legend and history, but he thereby spares us much tedious staging. The poet tells us in his preface that he has "not hesitated to antedate" certain incidents of Alfred's reign, "and in a word, to compress into a period of a few weeks the most striking events of a lifetime." Aside from these essentials of the plot, and the dramatis personae, already considered, there are numerous other historic references, many of which are mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation.

¹⁾ "England's Darling" I. 2, p. 13.

²⁾ Wilh. Malm. Gesta reg. Angl. II. §§. 139.—Ed. Hardy, p. 223.

³⁾ "England's Darling" I. 2, p. 10, and IV. 2., p. 92.

⁴⁾ Wilh. Malm. Gesta reg. Angl. II. §. 121. — Ed. Hardy, p. 181. Pages 8 and 11 of this dissertation.

⁵⁾ It is by poetic license that the poet applies the name Witan to the particular assembly held at this time.

⁶⁾ A.-S. Chron. ed. Thorpe, I., p. 148.

⁷⁾ Thorpe's A.-S. Chron., I. p. 166.

⁸⁾ Asser, p. 486.

⁹⁾ Ibid, p. 488 b.

¹⁰⁾ Asser, p. 479 c, 480 a.

¹¹⁾ A.-S. Chron., I., p. 148.

III. Comparison of the Alfred-figure.

Going a step further than the mere question of historical accuracy, we find that each of the four poems under consideration gives a different degree of prominence to the various characteristics of the hero, thus presenting in each case quite a distinct personality. These four conceptions are all of greater or less fidelity to history. As a means for comparing these four figures of Alfred, it will be best to consider the hero as he appears in each of the following capacities: as a soldier, administrator, scholar and philosopher, Christian, king; further, in private life as a husband and father. We will also notice his personal appearance; and each of these paragraphs will be introduced by the appellations given to Alfred in the capacity considered. The whole will be summarized in a conclusion.

I. The Soldier.

Under this head we may consider the hero's bravery and determination.

In Blackmore's poem, where because of the poet's excess the bravery is more like bravado, perhaps the simple appellations are most expressive. Alfred receives the appellation of "Heroe" over 35 times, "Albion's Heroe," "the British Heroe," "Britannia's Heroe" each three times, "proud Alfred" (p. 248), "bold Alfred" (p. 424), "the brave Briton" (p. 108), "brave Prince" (p. 414), "this aspiring Briton" (p. 5), "the valiant Briton" (p. 392) each once, "the valiant Heroe" twice (pp. 17, 315), "his (the Moor's) valiant Foe" (p. 398), "the advancing Chief" (p. 312), "earnest Britannia's Heroe" (p. 244), "Britannia's conquering Heroe" (p. 314), "the conquering Briton" (p. 394), "the Victor Heroe" (p. 322), "victorious Prince"

(p. 323), "the Victor" (p. 406), "the Victor-King" (p. 437), "Alfred wise and brave" (p. 416), each once.

In the course of his poem, Blackmore brings the hero not only into active military engagements, but into other perilous situations as well. Great bravery and strength were displayed in the fight with the tiger (B. I., p. 17). As a mere youth, the prince brought help to his father against the Danes (B. IV., p. 107). As intercessor between Artolan, king of Campania, and the insurgents, Alfred rode many times between the hostile armies in order to keep them at peace (B. V.). He maintained composure through the eruption of Aetna (B. VI.) and in his vision of Gehenna (B. VIII), as also when in danger of execution at the hands of the Agmatians (B. IX. p. 299). Here he also conducts a successful military expedition for the aged king, in which he slays ten illustrious heroes mentioned by name (pp. 311—315, 320). He returns from Burgundy to Navarre to lead an army successfully against the combined Moors and insurgents (B. XI.). In this battle he slays four Moorish heroes (pp. 392—394). In his fight with the Danes fourteen Northmen feel the power of his sword (B. XII.); and his address to the army on page 426 is very spirited. Most remarkable of all is the fact that this invincible warrior is never wounded. The strokes that he receives in battle serve only to arouse him to irresistible revenge. It would be an onerous and useless task to quote from a poem of this length more than the most striking passages.

"He said — And Guithun thus — Bestill your Breast
With your own Godlike Fortitude possest." B. I., p. 12.

"Then you may Albion raise to high command,
Establish Peace, and from a suff'ring Land
Drive foreign Arms." B. I., p. 14.

"Alfred beheld the Terrour from afar,
And dauntless stood to undertake the war." B. I., p. 16.

"But the prevailing Dane was not suppress'd
Nor Britain's painful Grievances redress'd
Till Alfred, who had ne'er before encas'd
His Limbs in Steel nor martial Danger fac'd,"
etc. B. IV., p. 107.

"He'll quell the Dane, and with a potent Hand
Sweep the devouring Locusts from the Land." B. VIII., p. 287.

"With graceful Pride, the Rider with an Air
And dauntless Aspect, such as Heroes wear
And such an inbred Fire and Valour shew,
Impatient of Delay to Battle flew." B. IX., p. 300.

"Then thro' opposing Files the Briton broke
And on the right and left at every Stroke
Kill'd or dismember'd Heroes, till the Slain
With ghastly Heaps deform'd the reeking Plain." B. IX., p. 313.

"Alfred that held his stagg'ring Foot from Flight
Inspir'd fresh Courage and renew'd the Fight." B. IX. p. 319.

"To charge the Foe the Prince intrepid sprung,
So when a fearless Lion has discry'd," etc. B. XI., p. 391.

"Long have the Cimbrians Albion's Spoils enjoy'd,"

and the rest of this address (B. XII., pp. 425—427).

Also in Blackmore we find references to the navy. In Tunisia (B. III.) Alfred inspects closely the ships and stores. Characteristic passages are:

"How does the Thought my ardent Passion please
Of building potent Navies o'er the Seas
Her Empire to extend, and make her reign
Secure by Land, while Mistress of the Main!" B. III., p. 85.

"These warlike vessels . . . much the Heroe please:
He their peculiar Shape and Size survey'd
And wise Remarks upon their Structure made." B. III., p. 88.

Descriptions of the vessels are given on pp. 92—93. In B. VII., the prophecy runs,

"He 'll quell the Dane
And with his Navy guard Britannia's Shore." p. 287.

In Mallet and Thomson's masque, the appellations are not particularly numerous in this regard. The hero is called "the conqueror" (Act III. sc. 8, p. 59), and he refers to God as "that aspiring power whose deputy I am, His minister of vengeance" (II. 3, p. 33). In III. 7 he is called "Prince and patriot" (p. 58). The poet says of him in the prologue that

he was "in arms renown'd", and that at the time of Danish invasion

"This prince arising bade confusion cease,
Bade order shine, and blest his isle with peace."

In the course of the poem, he figures often as the soldier, and martial affairs make up a large part of the plot. Observe the skill with which Alfred arranges the attack in I. 3, and particularly the instructions to Edwin on p. 18 and in II. 9, p. 45. In Act II. sc. 7, we hear the strokes of his own sword behind the scenes, as he slays two of the three marauding soldiers and rescues his wife. Again, besides the triumphal procession in III. 7, the following passages are significant. —

Hermit. — "Your enterprise is bold — and may be fatal". II. 3, p. 33.

Devon. — "By me assur'd their sovereign still survives,
Survives to take due vengeance on those robbers." I. 3, p. 16.

"Just to the fatal instant Alfred rose
In all his terrors," etc. III. 6, p. 55.

Alfred. — "to guard
His well-earn'd portion from the sons of rapine." I. 7, p. 24.

"And generous war to humble proud oppressors." I. 7, p. 25.

"His minister of vengeance, on I go
To victory or death." II. 3, p. 33.

"Be of courage." II. 4, p. 35.

"and were that number trebled,
This island is their grave." II. 6, p. 37.

"Now stern vengeance guide
The sword we draw." II. 6, p. 37.

In this section too we may notice the founding of the English navy. This is dwelt upon by the poet with considerable spirit. We must remember in this connection that the poem was written in the same half century with the war of the Spanish and the Austrian succession, and that in the one the victories of Blenheim and Malplaquet and the capture of Gibraltar, in the other the successes of Anson on the sea, were still fresh in the public mind. Hence the prologue to the original masque of Alfred spoken by Mr. Garrick as follows:

"What! shall the Parlyvous make such a racket,
And we not lend a hand to lace their jacket?
Still shall Old England be your Frenchman's butt?
Whene'er he shuffels we should always cut."¹⁾

In the present edition of the poem Alfred says:

"Tis naval strength that must our peace assure.
Be this the first high object of my care,
To wall us round with well-appointed fleets.
In them our sole dominion of the sea,
Our wealth and grandeur, can alone be found,
The one great bulwark of our separate world." III. 10, p. 65.

The hermit continues in a similarly noble strain, and a vision of the ocean with ships is presented. Then follows the famous ode of Thomson, which has become a classic in English.

"When Britain first at heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian-angels sang this strain:
Rule Britannia, rule the waves:
Britons never will be slaves." III. 10, p. 67.

There are six stanzas with this refrain. This poem was adapted from the earlier one of Thomson by Lord Bolingbroke in 1751. The stanza quoted, together with the second and, except for a transposed order of lines, the fourth, has been retained from the original. From that poem, however, one very characteristic stanza besides two others of less importance has been omitted. It ran thus:

"To thee belongs the rural reign,
Thy cities shall with commerce shine;
All thine shall be the subject main:
And every shore it circles thine.
Rule Britannia, rule the waves,
Britons never will be slaves."²⁾

In Redcliffe's poem the soldierly appellations given to Alfred are likewise few, and are confused with those of royalty. In Act IV., sc. I, p. 99, he is called "our great chief," in IV. 3

¹⁾ "The Poetical Works of David Malet" Edinburg, 1780. — Vol. II,

²⁾ "Poetical Works" of Jas. Thomson, Tauchnitz edition, p. 265.

p. 109, "my chief;" in V. 4, p. 151, "victorious king," p. 152 "our gallant King," in V. 9. p. 175, "our own brave king," in V. 1, p. 134, "brave harper."

Of Alfred's youthful bravery we are told in I. 1., p. 12, where a Saxon says,

"Our present lord —
A youth, half-fledged—with such bright valour fought,
That none—his brothers dying—seemed more fit
To wear the crown, and drive the wolves away."

And in I. 2, p. 17, the valet says,

"Natures such as his,
In spite of weary looks, hold bravely on,
And count on time for remedies,"

in the very midst of his season of indisposition, Alfred exclaims, I. 6, p. 34,

"Fierce Northmen waste our tillage; fain would I
Lead forth my Saxons, and the country purge
Of their foul presence, — but it may not be."

His crown he "fain would gem with deeds" II. 3, p. 51. When he goes to Athelnay it is "alone, with wallet at his side, and staff in hand" (II. 3, p. 52) a hazardous undertaking for those days. He is "rich in resolutions death may quench, but suffering cannot shake" (III. 1, p. 66). At the end of his season of retirement he says (IV. 3, p. 109).

"I long for action — long to reappear
In arms, and council, firm in conscious strength
As erst at Ashdune, when the Danish hosts
Shrank from the field, or drench'd it with their blood."

Alfred's ability as a commander and strategist is displayed in such passages as the following:

"The troops that guard
His royal person are already placed
Where best they may control a lawless mob." I. 2, p. 18.

Alfred. — "Better to know one's weakness than to lean
On fancied strength, when battle is the test." IV. 7, pag. 122.

"Myself must view the Danish camp; so great
Our stake, I may not leave a rush to chance.
By forest paths, disguised, and if not lone,
Attended sparingly, my friends must come." IV. 7, p. 123.

"Better to choke him from his hold, than waste
Fresh streams of blood to hasten what is sure." V. 5, p. 155.

Alfred makes four addresses to his troops, all expressive of a talented leader. They run as follows:

"By confidence in long success benumb'd,
And fondly waiting for th' expected burst
Of fends fermenting here, our neighbour foes
Are ill prepared; a sudden blow struck home
May quench in blood and death their dreamy hopes," etc. V. 2, p. 139.

"They waver; see! they break!
On, my brave children, on!" etc. V. 3, p. 144.

"Well have ye fought this day," etc. V. 4, p. 151.

The only mention of the fleet is in V. 8, p. 172, where Alfred says,

"Girt by the seas, we must have fleets to guard
Our naked coasts, and line them with the gold
Of wealthier lands. — — — — —
Some part is done already; Danish flogs
Have stoop'd to ours at sea, and Danes have learnt
Enough to shake their pride of empire there."

In Austin's poem, the appellations denoting the soldier are not numerous. In Act I. sc. 3, we have,

Alfred.— "Grant me, God King!
I Alfred, your week servant, yet may be
Law to North Wales and terror to Strathclyde." —p. 16.

And in II. 3, p. 51.

"Then pledge me in the mead-bowl, spearmen all,
Me, your host-leader!"

In the closing verses he is called "England's Oarsman", p. 94.

In the action, Alfred plays much less a martial role, as far as space is concerned, than in either of the other poems; yet the passages that call for notice here are numerous. Those that bear special reference to the king's personal bravery are the following:

Ethelnoth. — "[Enserfing] all but Alfred the King." I. 1, p. 4.

Ethelred. — "But while he roams abroad
Now in this cloak, now that, swordless, alone,
Spying the where and whither of his foes. —" I. 1, p. 4.

Ethelred. — “Ne’er would they guess
There moves the man so reckless as to range
Unshielded ’mid his foes.” II. 2, p. 37.

First Freeman. — “Never, like Buhred, would he quit the land,
Came every Danish oarsman over sea
To hem us in.” II. 3, p. 43.

Alfred (to thanes). — “Nay, if you should leave
The Crown of Egbert fenceless on my brow,
It should not fall till I had fallen too.” II. 3, p. 44.

Edward. — “Nay never think to see him weep or wail!
Like clouds that are not low enough for rain,
His grief is far too high to fall in tears.” III. 1, p. 68.

The following passages express Alfred’s determination and zeal
for his cause. —

Alfred. — “If Heaven but deign
Use my poor brain and blade to wrench it back
For Christ and Cerdic’s race!” I. 3, p. 15.

Second Serf. —
“They say Alfred the King wrote rare ditties before the Army broke out
anew; though more anent spear-thrusts than tankards.” II. 1, p. 35.

Alfred. — “To rouse my people from their peaceful hives,
And make them swarm for battle!” II. 2, p. 39.

Fourth Freeman. — “As he would stoop upon the Danes, and force
Their filthy pannels to disgorge the food
Poached in our English pools.” II. 3, p. 42.

Alfred. — “In this strong Isle, sequestered by the sea
From tread outlandish, victory upon ground
Our own to keep or lose, is half defeat.” IV. 2, p. 93.

Expressive of Alfred’s skill as a leader is the advice to his son
in III. 2, pp. 68—70, beginning:

“Hold fast by that. Bring but the best to front,
And keep the unsteady well in hand behind.
’Tis not the biggest udder gives most milk;
And with a trusty handful one may deal
A deadlier stroke than with a land in arms,” etc.

Other expressive passages are:

“And though his brain is swayed by thought, his hand
Keeps just as steady on the hilt.” I. 1, p. 5.

Edward. — “When Alfred’s peaceful daydreams all fulfilled,
Men may beneath their roof-tree safely sit,
Not harried by these rovers of the sea.” I. 2, p. 13.

Second Serf. — “Trust Alfred for sousing them less wastefully nor
that, before gangdays come round anew.” II. 1, p. 33.

Here too we observe allusions to the navy.

First Freeman. — “In every art
He shows the way — — — —
And plans the sinewy curve of each fresh keel.” II. 3, p. 42.

In scene 4 of act II. we have Alfred in his study planning his vessels.

Alfred. — “Right meseem
Stem, stern and keel, nigh twice the bulk of those
The Frisians use, and with a sharper sweep.
God grant that I may chase them from the seas
And gird this island with a watery belt
Not all the world in arms can cleave or cross!”¹⁾ II. 4, p. 53.

In IV. 2, Ethelred announces a naval victory:

“Great news, my Lord! The ships you bade us build
Full nigh on twice the length of pagan esks,
At Swanage²⁾ on the robber swan-necks rode,
And wedged them through the waves.” p. 93.

Alfred. — “For why on English soil should foe’s foot stand?
The battlemented Sea will beat him off,
So we but man it, and our bounding prows
Scatter him flying deathward o’er the foam
Like loose leaves harried by the autumnal wind.” IV. 2, p. 94.

But perhaps the most stirring of all is the following stanza from Alfred’s song when in the disguise of a minstrel at the Danish camp.

¹⁾ Compare the description of Alfred’s ships, A.-S. Chron., I. p. 174, under the year 897. — “þa het Aelfred cyng timbrian langscipu ongen þa æscas þa wæron fulneah tu swa lange swa þa oðru sume hæfden LX. ara sume mâ: þd wæron ægðer ge swiftran ge unwealtran ge eac hieran þonne þa oðru uæron nawðer ne on Fresisc gesæpene ne on Denise. bute swa him selfum ðuhte þæt hie nytwyrðoste beon meahten.”

²⁾ Asser, p. 479 c, 480 a.

"Then mighty and master of all within her,
 — Of Celt and Briton,
 Angle and Frisian,
 Saxon and Norseman,
 Shall England plough like the whale and walrus,
 The roaring ridges
 Of foam-necked water,
 With long-oared warships
 And keels high-beaked;
 And never a foeman,
 Eastward or westward,
 Shall dare to raven
 Her salt-sea inlets,
 Her grim gray nesses,
 But swift at the sight of her rearing cradles,
 Shall scud and scatter,
 Like wild geese fleeing
 'Twixt wave and welkin,
 Away from the dread of the shrilling weapons
 Of foam-fenced England!"

IV. 2, pp. 88, 89.

As regards Alfred's organization of the army, Austin is the only one that makes reference thereto. It is found in the king's address in II, 3, p. 50.

"You know my law, whereby, one half the year,
 Each one may keep his hearth and till his land,
 Eschewing for that while the toll of war,
 But, when the time is past, he must anew
 Take shield and spear." ¹⁾

The conclusion from all these data is perhaps more easily felt as an impression than expressed in words. Alfred the soldier, according to Blackmore, is simply a Dare-devil Dick vested with miraculous power of the sword. The Alfred of Mallet and Thomson is a brave man, but we do not feel that he is a nation's leader. Only in Redcliffe and Austin do we feel that the cause of a nation is at stake, and yet in this respect the two works differ greatly. The former author introduces the more actual fighting upon the stage and gives proportionately a larger part of his plot to the great historical movement that he portrays. In Austin's poem, on the other hand, Alfred does not draw sword until the last act, and our interest is largely centered on the love episode between

¹⁾ A.-S. Chron., ed. Thorpe, I, p. 166

Edward and Edgiva. And yet, so many are the historic touches and so much greater is the aesthetic worth of the later work, that the impression we derive from it of Alfred the soldier is far stronger than from any of the other poems, because more clearly defined.

2. The Administrator.

Under this head we shall not only consider Alfred as legislator and judge, but will also notice his personal love of justice and right.

In Blackmore the epithets and appellations that apply here are: "Alfred the Just" (p. 332), "Alfred, just and as an Angel wise" (p. 349), "faithful Alfred" (p. 429). His clemency is expressed by "gen'rous Alfred" (p. 178), "gen'rous Prince" (p. 32). It is the qualities here hinted at that entitle him to be called "the People's Darling" (107).

In the course of the action, we find the hero in the capacity of student of law, of intercessor, etc. Indeed, as we are informed in the first lines, it was

"Moved with gen'rous Instinct to explore
In various Realms the Customs, Arts, and Laws"

that Alfred left his native land. In B. V. (pp. 153—158) he investigates the causes of the sedition in Artolan's territories, and "purposes terms of accommodation" (pp. 160—166). In the advice given by Alfred to the king there are some characteristic passages. —

"Better one favour'd chief should sink, than all
The ruin'd Frame of Government should fall." B. V., p. 164.

"To displace
Pontiff's who dangerous principles embrace,

— — — — —
Will Feuds remove and stable Peace ensure." B. V., p. 165.

Thus he induces Artolan to reform his court. Again in B. XII. his advice to the King of Navarre with regard to the treatment of the insurgents is not unworthy of Alfred.

"Prudential Virtue, which is wont to use
The middle Way, must here that Way refuse.
Either Extreme you may successful choose." p. 409.

“And as in Justice, Kings should not be slow,
But should at once their utmost Rigour show,
So then to all they shou’d indulgent grow.” p. 410.

Alfred’s clemency is particularly prominent in his intercession for the conspirators against his life in B. V., although at first he thought he should “let the Laws exert their Force to vindicate his Cause.” (p. 180).

Worthy of note too is Alfred’s question to Ardilla, a lord of Tunisia, as to the commercial success of that state. The reply informs him that

“Tunisia’s Monarch made a wise Decree
That this fair Port, frequented as you see,
Should be to Strangers as to Natives free.” ¹⁾ B. III., p. 86.

Alfred’s instruction in Gehenna is also significant, showing crimes from which he kept free. —

“There bye corrupted Judges, who for Gold
Subverted Right and bought Decrees enroll’d
Or urg’d with Party-Malice wrested Laws,
And shameless judg’d the Person, not the Cause.” B. VIII., p. 276.

“Here they that threaten’d Torments did defy,
Imagin’d deep Deceit and hugg’d a Lye.” B. VIII., p. 280.

The treaty with the Danes is noticed on pages 443 and 447. —

Other characteristic passages are: —

“Defend a life which solemn I devote
Justice and pure Religion to promote.” B. I., p. 8.

“From various Modes of Empire to select
The fittest Schemes and Rules.” B. I., p. 21.

“I might by wise and just and equal Laws
Advance the Realm, and aid Religion’s Cause.” B. I., p. 22.

“I ntent in different Monarchies to learn
The wisest Forms of Empire, and discern
The Laws and Customs, whence those Blessings spring.” B. III., p. 75.

“And as I vow to purge Britannia’s Court,
Vice to suppress and Virtue to support.” B. III., p. 83.

“I judge the Breach of fundamental Laws,
Vows, and religious Rites, may justly cause
The tribes their State-Directors to arraign.” B. V., p. 158.

¹⁾ Cf. p. 30. Laws regarding rights of trade, Pauli’s König Alfred, p. 171.

"Yet bound by strict irrevocable vows", etc. and the rest of Alfred's reply to Albana (B. VII., p. 220); and after his weakness in Sicily he says to Guithun,

"Offended Justice frowns, how much I fear
Before th' August Tribunal to appear!" B. VII., p. 235.

"I'll justify the Rod and not arraign,
That wounds my Body and inflicts my Pain." B. VII., p. 237.

The prediction regarding his rule reads, —

"While with friendly Grace
Soft Equity and rig'rous Law embrace:
Freedom shall Might, and Justice Peace caress." B. VIII., p. 287.

Alfred's prayer, B. IX.

"Great Pow'r, who dost the Just protect,
And perjur'd Nations in thy Wrath correct,
To vindicate thy Laws, and States affright
From breaking Leagues and violating Right," etc. p. 311.

As is already evident, the appellations in this case are not all very clearly marked, or easily distinguished from those that apply to Alfred as king. In Mallet's poem, however, we may perhaps regard the following as applicable to him in capacity of lawmaker and administrator: "Alfred, father of the state" (I. 5, p. 20)., "the common father of my people, patron of honour, virtue, and religion" (I. 7, p. 24).

From this point of investigation the most suggestive lines of Mallet are the following:

Alfred. — "If not to shelter useful worth — — — — —
And deal out justice with impartial hand,
— — — — —
Yet more; if not to build the public weal
On that firm base which can alone resist
Both time and chance, on liberty and laws;
If not for these important ends ordain'd
May I ne'er poorly fill the throne of England." I. 7, pp. 24, 25.

"The truly brave
His foe in equal arms will dare to meet:
Vanquished he dares not injure, nor insult him." III. 9, p. 63.

"But let us, Hermit, try
By justice, mercy, arms and arts improv'd,

By freedom fenc'd around with sacred laws,
Our promis'd bliss to merit and adorn." III. 10, p. 66.

"Lost is the nation deaf to glory's call!
And with fallen virtue, freedom too must fall!" III. 10, p. 70.

Alfred's treaty with the Danes is omitted by Mallet.

In Redcliffe's poem there are properly no epithets that apply here. The only possible ones are the adjective "gracious" (pp. 14, 137, 139, 167), and "our own good Alfred" (p. 97).

Alfred's readiness to hear his people's complaints is expressed in the following:

Ethelwolf. — "Here in your Sov'reign's mansion free you are
To name your wants, your wishes, nay, if such
Your bent, the wildest plaints." I. 2, p. 19.

Ethelwolf refers to Alfred as "some loved ruler whose benignant sway maintained in peace" the "weal and rightful pow'r" of the realm. The king's clemency is seen in his address to the traitor Ordulf, in V. 2, p. 138. — "Nay, cast all doubt aside, most noble Earl!" etc.

His exactitude is expressed in the following:

Chief Clerk. — "Make out the writs; take heed the King's commands
Be strictly kept; in matters of the State
Letter and form must be right authodox." II. 4, p. 53.

Soldier. — "'Tis well we're at our post; his eye detects
The slightest flaw." V. 5, p. 154.

Saxon. — "And fingers slow to fight may yet be swift
To punish a loose tongue or daring looks." I. 1, p. 12.

Alfred the statesman appears strongest in the negotiations with Guthrum, V. 6, pp. 158—160, in the speeches beginning

"Most frankly stated; East Anglia, I
For my own part object not; Mercia too
Restored to Saxon rule may have my voice," etc.

and

"Pardon me in turn;
Distrust of circumstances differs much
From doubt of personal good faith," etc.

Alfred's project to draw up a code of laws is foreshadowed in the following. —

"Our social customs and our Saxon laws
 Dating from eld, retain such healthy seeds
 That taking root, and spreading o'er the land,
 Our race in after-years may head the world,
 And render boundless service to mankind." ¹⁾ V. 8, p. 171.

In Austin there is perhaps no appellation that suggests the great and just lawgiver, unless it be the terms of endearment given by the people, as "comfort," "shepherd," "darling" (II. 3, p. 52 and IV. 2, p. 94). For the origin of these terms see page of this essay.

In the action of the poem, however, the king is strikingly presented in this capacity, and first in act II. sc. 3, in his Witan. There all may have a voice, the only condition being that the speakers be fighting-men.

"For 'twere unmeet that those who in a State
 Wield no more worthy weapon than the tongue,
 Should have or voice or share in ruling it." II. 3, p. 43.

Here too he frees the serfs ²⁾ on condition they become warriors and the witan agree (II. 3, p. 46). Again, when needing to retain his soldiers in arms over the time set by law, he will nevertheless not detain them, unless they surrender by free will the right to retire. ³⁾

"Their will is still their own to go or stay"
 — — — — — "and the law,
 The law shall stand, if 'tis their will to go.
 Never shall the law be broken in this land,
 Leastways by me." II. 3, p. 50.

¹⁾ Asser, p. 497 b.

²⁾ Alfred's personal serfs were given their freedom by his testament. — Pauli, p. 291.

³⁾ See Turner II., p. 42: Alfred accounts for man's being endowed with free-will. Also Cardale's Boethius, pp. 372 ff. — "*Hu wolde þe nu lician 3if hwylc swiþe rice cyning wære & næfde nænne fryne mon on eallon his rice. ac wæron ealle þeowe. Ða cwæþ ic. Ne þuhte hit me nauht rihtlic. ne eac 3erisenlic. 3if him sceoldan þeowe men þenizan.*" — p. 374.

Again we see the lawmaker in Alfred's treaty with the Danes, which is strong and determined (IV. 2, p. 91).

"Henceforth then,
Live, like to us, at peace within this land,
Our brothers, not our bane; our were-gild yours,
Our foe your foe, our feud your feud, and you
No less than we, English in name and heart." etc.

Similar determination is shown when, after ceding Wantage¹⁾ and Athelnay to his wife, Alfred seals the bequest with,

"And may the bane of Christ and all His saints
Blind him that setteth it aside!" II. 3, p. 48.

Other characteristic passages are:

Plegmund. — "He never wantoned with his word nor now
Will prove untrue to it." II. 2, p. 36.

First Freeman. — "He looks like justice throned." II. 3, p. 40.

Fourth Freeman. — "I would as lief face God, were I to blame,
As stand, for fault stripped bare, before the King." II. 3, p. 41.

Alfred (to his son). — "Truth is the free man's weapon, and a lie
Makes him unfree and sinks him to the serf.

— — — — —

For truth is justice, fairness, fearlessness,
And is to man as honesty to woman." II. 4, p. 54.

Judging from the passages just cited, the qualities they exemplify are given about equal prominence in Redcliffe and Austin. Indeed in Redcliffe, Alfred's actual legal activity is greater than in Austin. For instance, England's Darling makes no definite allusion to his proposed code of laws. But here as elsewhere Austin's conception of his hero is so much nobler and more clearly defined than the conceptions of the other poets, that the character is more strongly felt by the reader. Compare two similar scenes, Alfred, presiding in state of court, Redcliffe, V. 8, and Alfred presiding over his Witan, Austin, II. 3. The superiority of the latter is at once apparent.

¹⁾ Pauli, pp. 284. — "And Ealhswiðe pone ham æt Lambburnan, and æt Waneting, and æt Eðandune." — Alfred's testament, Pauli, p. 322.

3. The Scholar and Philosopher.

Under this head we may notice the hero's perseverance in the advancement of learning, his foundation of schools, his authorship of books, his philosophical views and tendency to set mind above body — in short his general intellectual activity.

The epithets in Blackmore's work are as follows: "Alfred, wise and brave" (p. 416), "wise Briton" (p. 103), "wise Prince" (p. 28), "Alfred, just and as an Angel wise" (p. 349), "discerning Prince" (p. 30), "the enquiring Heroe" (p. 153), "the curious Briton" (pp. 210, 378), "the attentive Briton" (p. 218), "the attentive Prince" (p. 374), and perhaps "restless Alfred" (p. 234).

As the story develops, perhaps one of the most notable qualities displayed by the hero is his desire to see and hear everything. The poet gives us the exact course of every journey and the objects visible by the way, as if Alfred himself were noting it all. His love for the scholar's quiet mode of life is displayed in his admiration of the hermit's cave and simple surroundings (B. I. pp. 27, 28).

"How sweet is lonely Life,
And this serene Simplicity! from Strife
And Uproar free." etc.

"Blest were our Fathers in the eldest Age!
Ere Lust of Pow'r did men in Arms engage;
Ere avaritious Eyes were charm'd with Gold!" etc.

"I hesitate, and undetermin'd weigh
Sweet Solitude against Imperial Sway." B. II. p. 62.

His high regard for the learned Hermit himself is seen in B. X., where Alfred tells the king of Navarre,

"He'll teach industrious Rules of Life, and show
How Arts may flourish and the Kingdom flow
In Wealth, and great and formidable grow." p. 367.

We find Alfred always teachable.

"Prince Alfred's unresisting Mind
Receiv'd th' Impressions by the Guide design'd." B. II. p. 68.

"I, to enrich my Mind, left Briton's Soil." B. III. p. 75.

In Sicily, at the words of reproach from Guithun, he

“began to melt;
Soon strong Emotions in his Bosom felt,
And while to right Reflection he return'd,
He saw his Folly and his Errour mourn'd.”

B. VII. p. 229.

At the court of Halla in Tunisia he gives evidence of his poetical talent.

“Alfred has felt this Flame inspire his Veins,
And often sung his low and artless Strains.”

B. III. p. 82.

For the song at the banquet (pp. 96—102) we cannot find very high commendation. It has at all events the ring of the scholastic in it more than of the poet. Of the song in the Danish camp (B. XII. p. 421) only the subject is given us. —

“He sung the warlike Bands
And high extoll'd the Chief of great Commands.”

But is it said that the hero's harp “could with charming Sounds command the ravish'd Soul” (p. 420). The praise bestowed on Alfred by the love-lorn lady Albana may be excessive:

“Endow'd with Letters, Elegance of Taste,
And courtly Manners yet by none surpast,
You from a distant Isle and colder Skies,
Sicilia's Sons and Rome herself surprise.”

B. VII. p. 219.

Of Alfred's authorship there is no mention in Blackmore. The prince does however say with regard to the founding of schools,

Should I the imperial Crown of Albion wear,
By me erected Colleges shall stand,
And Schools of Learning on the fruitful Land.”

B. III. p. 82.

Of wise saws so numerous in Austin there are few, — none indeed well defined, and the truest examples of Alfred's wisdom are found in his advisory remarks already noted under the head of lawgiver. We will therefore call attention here only to his song before King Halla's court. It is more philosophical than poetic. For example,

“It comes alone from thy divine Decree,
That what is possible shall actual be,
Thy Purpose is the Spring of all Futurity.”

p. 98.

This may be compared with the philosophy of Boethius¹⁾, according to which God is not only the creator but preserver of the universe. This, however, is also the general Christian view; and we but note the similarity here, as a matter of passing interest. It is not likely that Blackmore ever read Alfred's Boethius, or concerned himself about the philosophical views of his great hero.

Also the next quotation reminds one of the treatise in the Boethius on the freedom of the will. But Blackmore has said so little and that so indefinitely, that it is useless to attempt a close comparison. —

"Thou with unerring Prospect dost foresee
How a free Agent shall determin'd be;
Contingency to us is Certainty to Thee." p. 98.

And on the following page the physician-poet makes Alfred refer quite impossibly to the circulation of the blood and the action of the brain. — As in Austin's poem Alfred speaks of Rome, her former magnificence and fall, so in Blackmore he pronounces an apostrophe on the imperial city (B. V., p. 148). We may further note the following disconnected passages. —

"But when the Pontiff saw his Virtues shine,
His Reason, Wit, and Sentiments divine," etc. B. IV. p. 115.

"The courteous Lord, who fully understood
Alfred's great Mind and Aims at publick Good." B. V. p. 153.

"But Britain's Prince with Eloquence divine
And Weight of Reason, labour'd to incline
The Monarch," etc. B. V. p. 164.

In Mallet the appellations are few. "Our sad guest" as used in I. 1, p. 12, is indicative of contemplation, but "the poor stranger" (II. 2, p. 30) is applied simply from outward appearances.

The characteristic passages are as follows:

"for arts of peace ador'd." Prol.

"Taught liberal arts to humanize the mind
And heaven-born science to sweet freedom join'd." Prol.

Alfred. — "If not to raise anew our English name
By peaceful arts that grace the land they bless," etc. I. 7, p. 24.

¹⁾ Turner, Hist. of the A.-S. II., p. 38 and Boethius, Cardale ed., p. 198.

Emma. — “Against you aged oak,
Pensive and lost in thought he leans his head.” I. 1, p. 8.

Alfred. — “O may the toils I yet must undertake,
The slumbering genius of this isle awake!” III. 10, p. 69.

Hermit. — “Chief, let devotion to the sovereign mind,
A steady, chearful, absolute dependence
On his best wisest government possess thee.” I. 7, p. 24.

Alfred occasionally gives utterance to such aphorisms as the following: —

“The plain man is most loyal.” II. 4, p. 34.

“Yet tho’ heaven means all humankind to bless,
From his own labours man must draw success.” III. 10, p. 69.

“Lost is the nation deaf to glory’s call!
And, with fallen virtue, freedom too must fall!” III. 10, p. 70.

Eagerly does he give instruction for the education of his children (II. 9), which we notice elsewhere.

In Redcliffe’s poem the only appellations that apply here are those referring to Alfred’s musical accomplishments. He is called “harper” three times (pp. 127, 130, 134) and a “wandering bard” on p. 131.

What knowledge Alfred displays is chiefly that of human nature. He knows that his people, in order “to mend, must feel how vain their self-reliance, and submit to discipline’s stern yoke” (II. 3, p. 52). This will be accomplished by his “mysterious absence” and their “dearth of leadership” (p. 42). He understands how to wheedle the termigant Githra (III. 2, p. 69). He has a tendency at times to philosophize. —

“Oh! could the hearts
Of my rude folk be kneaded into shape
Like that, my oaten charge,” etc. III. 4, p. 79.

“What will not cleanly taste
And a brisk hand effect?” IV. 7, p. 126.

“The dead,
Whate’er in life their acts, of kindred mould
Touch us too nearly, not to move our hearts,
And claim a sigh unsanction’d by their worth.” V. 4, p. 152.

Alfred gives utterance to a few aphorisms: "all equal here, as in the womb and grave" (IV. 3, p. 111), "hurry speeds not" (IV. 7, p. 123).

The songs of the royal harper are passable (V. 1, pp. 128 to 130, 132—144), but we are not told whether they were of his own composition. At all events, they answered well their purpose.

His desire to advance the cause of education is seen in his own words in V. 8. —

"To wisdom, learning, skill, wherever found,
I must appeal, — there seek wherewith to mould
My dreams, my longings into vital shape.
Asser is one who stands in high repute,
And him I would secure at once." p. 170.

"You have my purpose: knowledge is our want,
And that, like other objects not our own,
Must be imported; what myself can do
In lore or science, shall not tarry." p. 171.

"at home we must create
Seats of embower'd peace, where undisturb'd
Fair Science and the Muses, all, may dwell." p. 172.

In Austin this side of Alfred's nature is much more strongly marked. Already in the appellations we have such terms as "a skilled clerk" (I. 3, p. 33), "the scholar" (I. 3, pp. 20, 24). Then in the action in I. 3, we find Alfred seated in the peasant's cot conning a map of England that he has himself made.

"Yes, thus I trace it, ocean-fashioned land," etc. p. 15.

And he knows its coasts and boundaries and provinces and rulers well. He then resumes the writing in his hornbook,

"that those who come
After my going may have means to learn
How fared it with their forebears." p. 16.

Edgiva recognizes in him

"that strange something, which nor you nor I
Nor any of the level breed of folk
Have in their seeming. — 'Tis a scholar's face," etc. p. 17.

The maiden expresses the longing to read and write, and Alfred

promises her, "Then so you shall, some day, and I will be your teacher" (p. 19). Later, in conversation with Plegmund Alfred refers to his labors of authorship.

"Pope Gregory's Pastoral,
We call his Hindbook in our English tongue,
Worcester's good Bishop, Werefrith, will revise.¹⁾
And I myself must follow, when I may,
Wulfstan and Othere through those norward seas.²⁾
Whence came our fathers on their flashing oars,
And with their Finnish voyages enrich
The pages of Orosius. Unto you
The harder task, to render faithfully
The Consolations of Philosophy,³⁾
Where I have missed what sage Boethius means." II. 2, pp. 38—9.

He laments the books destroyed by the Danes in York, and purposes for "all of them to be some day replaced — — — — and written plain in Saxon speech for English boys to read" (p. 39).⁴⁾ And again (III. 4, p. 80) he expresses his determination to send "to every bishop in the land", "a copy of Gregory's Pastoral."

"And every English boy must read and con
The chronicle of this his native land."

"But above all,
All men must learn its minstrelsy, and lift
Their hearts above the ground on wings of song." p. 80.

¹⁾ It was not the Pastoral Care, but the Dialogues of Gregory that Werefrith was commissioned to translate. See Prof. Wülker's *Grundriss zur Gesch. d. Ags. Lit.*, p. 437.

²⁾ King Alfred's Orosius, ed. by H. Sweet for the E. E. T. Soc., No. 79, London, 1883. — "*Othere sæde his hlaforde, Alfrede cyninge, þæt he ealra Norðmonna norþwest bude,*" etc — p. 17.

³⁾ For assigning to Plegmund the task of translating the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius we know of no authority. — See Wülkers *Grundriss*, p. 412.

⁴⁾ Compare Sweet's A.-S. Reader, p. 6. — "*ðætte eal sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbban ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to liornunga oðfæste, ða hwile ðe hie to name oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first ðe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan,*" etc. — Preface to King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care.

Elsewhere he makes mention of renewing the monasteries which in that day were the only institutions of learning.

"Werefrith and Plegmund shall renew
God's house at Winchester."¹⁾ IV. 2, p. 92.

"Therefore, my wife, depart,
With all the white souls that willing wend with you
Unto the eastern gate of Shaftsbury,²⁾
And build you there a nunnery." II, 3, p. 47.

In the forest scene (III. 4) Alfred has been teaching Edgiva to read, and relates the story of his own early beginnings (p. 71).

"How I remember my dear mother giving
Unto my brothers and myself a book," etc.

She wishes to hear of Rome, and he tells her of his visit (p. 72). He manifests an unfeigned interest in the girl's knowledge of plants and herbs; and is himself not wanting here.³⁾ And when she retires to rest and would have him do likewise, he says,

"Think not, my child, of me;
For I am wakeful, and there yet is light
Whereby to read a little." p. 78.

His excellent soliloquy on "how many hands it takes to build a State" reminds us of a passage in his Boethius.⁴⁾

Other significant passages are —

Ethelred. "In him
Are layman sense and cleric wisdom joined." I. 1, p. 5.

Edgiva. "He a hind!
"'Tis a skilled clerk, who reads and writes." I, 3, p. 23.

Second Serf. — "They say Alfred the King wrote rare ditties before
the army broke out anew." II. 1, p. 35.

^{1, 2)} There seems to be some confusion here. Regarding Winchester, Florence of Worcester remarks, "*Religiosa Christi famula Ealhswitha, regina, mater regis Eadwardi, vita decessit, quae sanctimonialium monasterium Wintoniae construxit.*" Thorpe's edition, p. 120, year 905. And of Shaftsbury, Asser says, "*Aliud quoque monasterium juxta orientalem portam Scestesbury habitationem sanctimonialium habitabile idem praefatus rex aedificare imperavit; in quo propriam filiam suam Aethelgeofu devotam Deo virginem abbatissam constituit.*" p. 495 a.

³⁾ For Alfred's botanical knowledge see Turner II. p. 58.

⁴⁾ Edition Cardale, p. 90. — "*þæt biþ þonne cýninges andweorc*", etc.

First Freeman. — “Aye, ever since the day
He learned the book of pictured Saxon verse
Quickest of all his brothers,¹⁾ he hath stored
His mind with written lore.” II. 3, p. 41.

First Freeman. — “In every art
He shows the way,” etc. II. 3, p. 42.

Alfred. — “Right welcome guest!
Asser, my own true Asser, light in dark,
Friend, teacher, trusty in all thought and deed.” II. 3, p. 48.

Fourth Farl. — “And he can sing of war, and love, and aught
That’s bidden of his craft.” IV. 2, p. 85.

And act IV. sc. 2 contains this song which, in spite of raving criticism, has the terse picturesqueness of the Anglo-Saxon poetry (pp. 85—89). No wonder the delighted Oskytel shouted,

“Look on him now!
He gleams as though to-day and yesterday
Had with to-morrow trysted in his gaze.” IV. 2, p. 87.

During the course of the poem Alfred gives utterance to many pithy aphorisms. Some of them are —

“For ’tis no gain
To be in letters wiser than your kind,
Withal in life more witless.” I. 3, p. 19.

“And she being honest needs will keep him so, —
Since ’tis the woman that keeps clean the man.” I. 3, p. 21.

“’Tis the will does half the work. Heave but with the heart and no
sack feels heavy.” II. 1, p. 34.

“’Tis not for length of days,
No, but for breadth of days that we should crave.” II. 2, p. 38.

“For he still reigns whose mind is not dethroned,
And though marauders ravage half his realm,
Upholds unseised the sceptre of his soul.” II. 3, p. 44.

“Face a head gust, and it will steady you.” III. 1, p. 63.

“’Tis not the biggest udder gives most milk.” III. 2, p. 68.

Here it is proper to notice also the references to Alfred’s clever mechanical inventions. The vessels have been mentioned

¹⁾ Asser, p. 474 a.

in the section on Alfred as a soldier. To his contrivance for measuring time ¹⁾ the poem contains two or three allusions. —

Plegmund. — “He is sure to come
Ere to the socket burns this rushlight down.” II. 2, p. 36.

Alfred. — “The dwindling rushlight in the lanthorn shows
We must unto the Witan.” II. 2, p. 39.

We have given considerable space here to the consideration of Alfred the scholar in Austin's poem because of the admirably natural way in which that poet presents this side of his hero's character. To the consideration of Blackmore's work we have also given considerable space in this section. But in that lengthy “epick”, so full of platitudes, in spite of the many references to Alfred's scholarly attainments and qualities, the picture presented is puerile and weak.

One interesting fact to be noted in this section is that the Alfred of the poets is a maker or at least a user of proverbs. He is not so confined to them in conversation as Schillers Wilhelm Tell, but he throws them aptly into his discourse. We have already observed how in the middle ages the people were fond of attributing their proverbs to the scholar-king. Although the “*Proverbia Alfredi*” noticed on page 13 often answer in sentiment to the character of our hero, yet none of the sayings put into his mouth by the poets can be traced to them.

Another noteworthy fact is that the Alfred of Blackmore has “often sung his low and artless strains”, and is the author of the songs noticed in this section. We may consider also that Austin's royal minstrel is the composer of his own songs, for in his Preface that author speaks of his hero as “a poet free from vanity”. Now whether this accomplishment in poesy is exclusively a characteristic of the Alfred of literature, or belongs to the historical Alfred as well, we are as yet unable to decide. The poets have in the mean time claimed the benefit of the doubt. (See “*Grundriss zur Geschichte der Angel-Sächsischen Litteratur*” by Prof. Rich. Wülker, p. 435.)

¹⁾ Asser, p. 496 c.

4. The Christian.

We have next to consider Alfred from the standpoint of religion. Under this head we may notice his trust in heaven, his veneration of God, and the lowliness of the man. Some of these virtues were discussed in the preceding section; but there they appeared simply as an intellectual belief: here they are an influential factor of life.

Blackmore's epithets are as follows: — "The Christian Heroe" (pp. 27 and 210), "the pious Prince" (p. 108), "the pious Briton" (p. 182), "the pious Heroe" (p. 384), "Albion's pious Prince" (p. 179). Suggestive of his fault and asceticism are "the indulgent Briton" (p. 79), "indulgent Alfred" (p. 226), "the contrite Heroe" (p. 234). Satan calls him "this degenerate Saxon" (p. 5), "the ambitious Boy" (p. 256), "Albion's hateful Prince" (p. 424). Albana addresses him "ungrateful, cruel, proud Atulpho's son" (p. 221).

To be sure Blackmore would have his Alfred behave at all times like a very exemplary young man. In a poem of such length it would be quite out of character to attempt to mention all the deeds of Alfred that are stimulated by Christian principles. Many of these indeed have been already noticed under different headings. Following therefore the simple plan suggested at the opening of this section, we find the passages giving evidence of the hero's trust in God remarkably few. This comes in part from the simplicity of the plot. The author does not leave his hero long enough on the rack of suffering or perplexity to extort from him either a cry of anguish or many expressions of saintly confidence. In the storm on the sea he prays,

"Gracious Protector of the Good and Just,
Thou art my Refuge, thou my Hope and Trust.

— — — — —
Living I'll love Thee, and in Death adore."

B. I, p. 8.

"The British Prince besought with ardent Pray'r
Th' Almighty Power the suff'ring Isle to spare."

B. VI, p. 210.

"To Heav'n in pure Devotion raised his Thought,
And Aid divine to guide his Steps besought."

B. VIII, p. 293.

"Devoutly then the Heroe raised his Eyes,
And, holding up the Treaty to the Skies
He said," — etc.

B. IX, p. 311.

"But first in solemn Pray'r did Heav'n invoke
To aid his Arms; then thus his Men bespoke.

— — — — —
Trust your great Maker; trust your righteous cause." B. XII, pp. 425—6.

These seem to be the only possible passages, and even they are not all well defined. Those of adoration, on the other hand, are too numerous to mention. Some of the most striking are: —

"Then thus, his Eyes upraised, he Heav'n addrest,
And his just sense of Aid Divine exprest.
Great King, Thy Hand the awful Scepter sways." etc. B. I, p. 10.

"And Alfred bless'd th' indulgent Care
Of Heav'n that did this wond'rous Scene prepare." B. I, p. 27.

"Yet here the Marks of Pow'r and wise Design
Clearly confess the Architect Divine." B. II, p. 37.

"Of gracious Heav'n's wise Scheme I thankful boast,
Which threw me Shipwreckt on Tunisia's Coast." B. III, p. 75.

"To blissful Heav'n I'll stretch the soaring Wing,
By strong celestial Rapture urg'd to sing
The boundless Knowledge of th' Eternal King."

and the rest of this song, which covers seven mortal pages
B. III, pp. 96—102.

"Lest we the dreadful Cup of Vengeance share,
Which Heav'n no longer patient, will prepare
For these Abodes." B. VI, p. 213.

"Now he is God, who the bright Seraph sent
His fate by timely Succour to prevent." B. VII, p. 239.

"Then Alfred — Idol-Worship we refuse
Fix'd in our Faith, and Death shall rather choose
Than on his Wrath by Disobedience run
Who reer'd the World, and made your God the Sun." B. IX, p. 299.

"To Christ's celestial Scheme of Truth resign'd,
I thus obey the Laws that he enjoin'd." B. XII, p. 439.

Again the passages that denote Christian lowliness are few
Besides those on page 293 and 425 quoted above to indicate
trustfulness, the hero says (p. 333, B. IX).

"Should gracious Heav'n allow
Alfred, deliver'd from my various Toil
And Dangers, to regain Britannia's Isle," etc.

and it is significant that in Gehenna he views the punishment of

"The Hypocrite, who blameless Men caress'd,
And more than vulgar Piety express'd." B. VIII, p. 280.

Other phrases not so easily classified are:

"Then Alfred—Heav'n indulgent is and good,
And takes Delight in Mercy, not in Blood." B. IX, p. 297.

"Next see th' apostate Princes, who inur'd
To right Belief at length their Creed abjur'd,
And urg'd by Lust of Empire and Applause,
Renounc'd their Saviour and betray'd his Cause." B. VIII, p. 275.

In B. X. Alfred attributes the pestilence in Navarre to some crime that has won the displeasure of heaven (B. X, p. 350). In B. XII (pp. 441—443) we have the conversion of the Danes, omitted by Mallet. The embassy sent by Gunter to Alfred say of their chief,

"Hence his old Rites determin'd to forsake,
And to the World sincere Profession make
Of Christian Faith, he your Assistance prays
And asks to be baptiz'd without Delays."

The story of how the prince was entrapped in Sicily by the love of Albana has been noticed on page 21—22. The subtleness of his passion is well brought out in B. VII (pp. 225—231), but being wholly fictitious, the narrative will not bear comparison with Austin's account of the king's youthful failing.¹) The spirit however is the same when on his bed of suffering the patient exclaims,

"I'll justify the Rod, and not arraign,
That wounds my Body and inflicts my Pain." B. VII, p. 237.

In Mallet the only epithets applicable here are "gracious Alfred" (I. 2, p. 13), and "my gracious master" (I. 3, p. 15). But in the course of the poem there is much to observe.

Alfred's trust in heaven is displayed in the following passages:

Alfred.— "Then heaven, who knows our wrongs, will deign to guide
The virtue it inspires." I. 3, p. 16.

¹ Page 75 of this dissertation.

"Shield me, heaven!"

I. 4, p. 19.

"To him our homage pay, with heart sincere,
Who bids affection hope and triumph fear;
Who, from the depth of ruin, yet may raise
This prostrate isle, and bless with better days."

I. 7, p. 27.

"My cause is just, my fortune in his hand
Who reigns supreme, almighty and all-good."

II. 9, p. 46.

The hero's veneration of God is displayed in the following:

Alfred. — "Thrice happy hermit!
Whom thus the heavenly habitants attend,
Blessing thy calm retreat."

I. 7, p. 21.

"See and acknowledge heaven's impartial hand
For violated oaths and plundered realms."

III. 9, p. 62.

"Your gods are idols : that sole power I serve
Supreme and one, is universal Lord
O'er earth and heaven."

III. 9, p. 63.

Alfred's humbleness is bespoken in the following:

Corin. — "Modest of carriage and of speech most gracious." I. 1, p. 8.

Alfred. — "Am I awake, and is it no illusion
That heaven thus deigns to look with mercy on me?" I. 6, p. 21.

"To heaven's will
In either fortune mine shall ever bend
With humble resignation."

I. 7, p. 23.

We may conclude then that he followed the hermit's advice (I. 7, pp. 23, 24), beginning, "Prince remember then the lessons by affliction taught," etc. There is no reference to the faults of youth that were so heroically purged by asceticism. In fact Mallet has seldom anything but praise for his hero. The only references to a fault occur in Act II. sc. 9, where the hermit chides Alfred for his complaining, with the words,

"Vulgar minds
Refuse, or crouch beneath their load: the brave
Bear theirs without repining."

I. 9, p. 43.

And again where Alfred manifests affection for his family so that he needs must think of them in the midst of public danger, the hermit recalls him to himself with the words, "Then show that passion in its noblest form," etc. (I. 9, p. 44).

In Redcliffe's poem there are no epithets that apply here. The characterizing passages, although short, are numerous. The hero's trust in heaven is expressed by the following. — "Be Heav'n our help" (II. 3, p. 51), "may Heav'n unfold the budding light!" (V. 2, p. 137).

"Be thou my guard, as thou hast been my guide,
Almighty Father! may I dream as hope
Inspires, and wake with livelier trust in Thee." V. 2, p. 143.

Cerdic. — "Aye, crown'd with hope, and throned on faith."
IV. 6, p. 119.

Alfred. — "God by our hands will smite the pagan host." V. 4, p. 145.

"Will God vouchsafe to guide? Toil! peril! wants!
With Him I brave you all; my heart's resolved." II. 4, p. 53.

Alfred's acknowledgment and veneration of God are seen in the following. —

Neot. — Great evils need strong remedies; I speak
As bids another king—the King of Kings.

King. — Highest of high that title!" I. 6, p. 36.

Alfred. — "Trust me, I've weigh'd it well : God's boon of life
I ne'er would idly waste," etc. IV. 7, p. 124.

"Thanks again to Heav'n!" (III. 1, p. 65), "My prayer, it seems, is heard" (IV. 3, p. 109), "Prudence is of God" (V. 6, p. 157), "On God, the giver, rests that peace you justly prize" (V. 8, p. 168). Particularly the service of thanksgiving with which the play closes, offered by Alfred's command, may be mentioned here (pp. 175—178).

Alfred's attitude toward the Church is also worthy of notice.

"The Church can scarce be wrong : my vows to Her
Were paid at Rome while yet I was a child." I. 6, p. 33.

He addresses the clergy thus:

"And fitted, Lords, are ye by head and hand
To take the lead in every enterprise
Inspired by peace, and wrought for lasting good." V. 8, p. 167.

He attempts the conversion of the Danes. —

"Would we were like in creed! A common faith
Might pave the road to peace." V. 6, p. 161.

"No Danes to vex us, none to waste our lands,
BlaspHEME the Cross, and make our homes their dens." V. 8, p. 165.

This episode is omitted in Mallet.

The king's lowliness is seen in his reception of Neot's reproof in I. 6, and also in the following. —

"Oh! God, from whose straight path too oft I 've stray'd,
Let not my previous gifts, now half obscured,
Sink into utter nothingness!" I. 6, p. 31.

And indeed, as we saw on page 30 of the dissertation, much is made out of this episode of the king's fault. His visitation with a sudden illness at his marriage is noticed in I. 2, p. 16.

Seneschal. — "Have I yet lost remembrance of the shriek
Which pierced both ear and heart, when lo! the prince
Reel'd as if stricken from on high, and fell
As a corpse falls," etc.

Nothing is said, however, of that part of the legend, according to which the illness was an answer to Alfred's prayer for aid against his youthful lust.

In Austin's poem, Alfred calls himself God's "weak servant", but otherwise there are no appellations that exactly apply here (I. 3, p. 16).

To the king's trust in God, the following passages bear witness.

Alfred. — "With God for guide,
We may upon their present fastness spring." II. 2, p. 37.

"By God's help and yours." II. 2, p. 39.

"And build you there a nunnery whose vows
May win the deathless Overlord of War
To lead our van in fight and fence our rear." II. 3, p. 47.

"Now tell them, Werefrith, that whoever falls
Fighting for England, soul-shot sure shall be,
And wend him straight from battle-doom to Christ." II. 3, p. 52.

"God edge your sword." III. 2, p. 70.

"Lord Christ shall have this England." IV. 2, p. 90.

The following passages bespeak his veneration.

Alfred. — "Twice sacred Kent,
Whither came Caesar first, Augustine next,
To win the isle to Government and God!" I. 3, p. 15.

"It should not fall till I had fallen too,
And gone to God to answer for my Rule,
As every shriven soul must answer Him
Whose sceptre does not pass." II. 33, p. 44.

"My father gave a hundred mancuses
For oil wherewith to keep the lamp alight
By Peter's tomb from Easter Eve till dawn,
As I too will, when better days shall come." III. 4, p. 73.

"For under God it is we work and war." III. 5, p. 80.

"In the Beginning when, out of darkness,
The Earth, the Heaven,
The stars, the seasons,
The mighty mainland,
The whale-ploughed water,
By God the Maker
Were formed and fashioned,
Then God made England." IV. 2, p. 86.

"Now praised be God! for this is news indeed." IV. 2, p. 93.

The hero's lowliness is evinced by the following.

"If Heaven but deign
Use my poor brain and blade." I. 3, p. 15.

"And by God's pleasure, fell the book to me, —
Too late a scholar." III. 4, p. 71.

"Now yet again the Lord of War hath placed
Your life within my hands, — — — —
— — — — —
But since Lord Christ hath won this fight for me,
And he is pitiful, I fain would spare
And leave you free within East Anglia." IV. 2, pp. 90, 91.

In Austin's poem the sentiments are more varied; and the simple three-fold analysis that has served our purpose thusfar, is not sufficient to include such passages as the following. —

"Their hostages I hold, but 'tis not meet
That upon these should fall the Christian sword." II. 3, p. 45.

Alfred. — “But there be
Others, unfree, withal, for whom Christ died.” II. 3, p. 45.

“Ethelred, my father, now with God.” III. 4, p. 72.

“A fallen Rome,
Yet awful in its fall; bemocked and scourged,
Humbled and thorn-crowned, as meseems is fit
For Christ’s own city, mastering still mankind
By the rood-token of His martyrdom.” III. 4, p. 72.

The conversion of the Danes is very simply told:

Guthrum. — “Bind me, an you will,
To Christ your King, who henceforth shall be mine.
For He is mightier than our Gods, as you
Are mightier than our Vikings.” IV. 2, p. 91.

In II. 4, Alfred refers to his youthful fault, and says to his son Edward,

“Nay, but let me tell,
For your soul’s hale, that in my own hot youth
Flesh with the spirit was so sore at war,
I prayed to God He would in kindness send
Some sickness that might chasten this base fire,
And make me rule-worthy, — — — —
— — — — — and God sent
A scourge so sharp, that I again besought
Some milder stroke, — — — — —
And in His goodness He then laid on me
The burden that you know.” II. 4, p. 55.

Here it might be well to observe one striking difference between Mr. Austin’s poem and the three others that we are considering—its lack of visitations from the other world. In this it does not lose but rather gains in force and vividness. Both Blackmore and Mallet, if indeed their purpose was more than to lend a fantastic diversity to their work, seem to have considered that through this use of the supernatural they were throwing around their hero a peculiar air of sanctity. They were, however, only removing him from the world of men, and so lessening the force of his virtues. In Redcliffe, the appearance of St. Cuthbert in a dream has not so ill an effect, and rests on legendary basis. That part of this legend by which a miracle of fishes was to attest the genuineness of the apparition is omitted by the poet.

5. Personal Appearance.

This place is as appropriate as any to remark upon the personal appearance of our hero.

In Blackmore the appellations are here not very expressive. Alfred is the "Court's Delight" (B. IV. p. 107), "godlike Alfred" (B. VII. p. 248), "the Flow'r and Joy of humane Kind" (p. 178); and Albana calls him "the Idol of my Heart" (p. 247). Further we are informed —

"Such were his blooming Beauties, such his Grace,
And such his Godlike Dignity of Face," etc. B. I, p. 20.

"Their graceful Manner and unvulgar Air
More than Plebeian Pedigree declare." B. III, p. 71.

"He Love and Wonder rais'd,
His Presence some, and some his Stature prais'd:
These his fine Shape, and those extoll'd his Face,
Where blooming Beauty strove with princely Grace." B. III, p. 74.

"His Mien majestic and polite Address,
That Worth Heroick and high Birth confess." B. IV, p. 115.

"With graceful Mien and Steps majestick." B. IV, p. 123.

"His princely Mien by all Spectators prais'd
And graceful Limbs that Love and Wonder rais'd." B. V. p. 147.

"With graceful Pride, the Rider with an Air
And dauntless Aspect, such as Heroes wear." B. IX, p. 309.

Mallet speaks in his prologue of "the godlike figure" (p. 5) and in the first act, scene 8 makes Corin say of Alfred,

"Modest of carriage, and of speech most gracious,
As if some saint or angel in disguise
Had grac'd our lowly cottage with his presence,
He steals, I know not how, into my heart,
And makes it pant to serve him. Trust me, Emma,
He is no common man. — — — — —
— — — — — Fair manhood in its prime,
Even thro' the homely russet that conceals him,
Shines forth and proves him noble." I. 1, p. 8.

Emma. — "Now by my holidame, a goodly person
And of most noble mien." I. 2, p. 32.

Of the personal appearance of his hero, Redcliffe has little to say. In his disguise Alfred is called "poor wandering bard" (p. 131) and "chiel" (p. 127) and "fellow" (p. 66). Danulf addresses him as "gentle youth" (p. 81) and Githra says he is "a Saxon youth" (p. 70); but she adds —

"He's young,
That's clear, well up in manhood though! his brow
A bed of early cares, with voice and mien
Above his seeming." III. 3, pp. 70—71.

The largest testimony is borne by the seneschal in I. 2, p. 16, as follows. —

"Nor needing crown or robe
To prime the splendour of his manly bloom,
He stood in youth's array." — — — —
"Raised from the floor, no midnight ghost more pale,
The blighted, tott'ring bridegroom pass'd within,
And from that hour, though since become both King
And father, his full strength has ne'er return'd:
Hence my anxieties."

In Austin's poem, Alfred's disguise is so perfect that his own son calls him "the muttering hind" (I. 3, p. 23), and he is further a "gaffer" (II. 1, p. 33), "a hoary wanderer" (II. 4, p. 60), "an aged gleeman" (IV. 1, p. 84). In I. 3. Edgiva says,

"'Tis a scholar's face,
With far-off gaze, away in other lands." p. 17.

Second Serf. — "Why, thou hast more thews than any twin of us, though thou 'rt not goodly grown, nor seemst fit for bearing loads." II. 1. p. 33.

Third Serf. — "He 's a rare hand at a pack,
Though we top him by a poll." II. 1, p. 34.

In II. 3, p. 41 a freeman speaks of the king's skill in sports when a boy.

In regard to the grace and comeliness of Alfred's person all four poets seem to agree, and Asser says, "*Accrescente infantili et puerili ætate, forma cæteris suis fratribus decentior videbatur, vultuque et verbis, atque moribus gratiosior.*"¹⁾ In regard to the hero's physical strength, however, both Redcliffe (I. 2, p. 16) and

¹⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., p. 473 e.

Austin (II. 4, p. 55) make Alfred a sufferer from disease. Their authority for this are the following words of Asser: "*Sed, proh dolor! eo amoto alius infestior in nuptiis, ut diximus, eum arripuit, qui a vigesimo ætatis suæ anno usque ad quadragessimum quintum eum die noctuque incessabiliter fatigavit;*" and that if by the mercy of God he obtained an hour's relief, from fear of the return of the disease he was almost "*quasi inutilem ut ei videtur, in divinis et humanis rebus.*"¹⁾ There is no contradiction here; for the bodily strength displayed by Austin's hero in II. 1, p. 33, is the result of his determination; and the disease is supposed to have been such as did not render him "*indignus et inutilis in mundanis rebus.*"²⁾

6. The King.

As all the qualities of the hero thusfar noticed determine in great measure and directly the style and character of his kingship, there remain to be considered under this head only, first, his own ideas not thusfar observed as to the duty of a king, and secondly, the place he occupied in the minds and hearts of his people.

In Blackmore, to begin again with the appellations, besides less significant names, as "the Prince" which occurs more than thirty times, "Albion's Prince" ten times, "Prince Alfred" nine times, "the British Prince" twelve times, "Britannia's Prince" fifteen times, "the King" seven times, "Britannia's Monarch" twice (pp. 447, 448), "Albion's future King" once (p. 125), "Britannia's distant Heir" once (p. 180), "the royal Guest" (p. 345) and similar, there occur more significant terms, as follows: "great Prince" twice (pp. 59, 442), "godlike Alfred, Britannia's Pride" (p. 108), "Britannia's Hope and Pride" (p. 123), "its Father, Patron, Guardian, Friend, and Benefactor" (p. 137). Alfred does not become king in Blackmore until the twelfth book, and the references to his kingly traits are few. Under Guithun's guidance there were awakened in him

"Mercy, Iudulgence, Love to Humane Kind,
That more than Compacts, Pow'r imperial bind." B. II, p. 68.

He says of himself,

¹⁾ Mon. Hist. Brit., p. 485 c.

²⁾ Ibid., p. 485 b.

"What care should Princes use
Lest they, by Pride and Passion sway'd, abuse
Their Pow'r, by Deeds despotick shake the Throne,
And by their People's Ruin cause their own." B. IV, p. 110.

His love of his people is expressed in,

"While in my thoughts revolving Britain's State,
I sigh'd, and mourn'd with Tears her hapless Fate." B. I, p. 21.

And Guithun prophesies of him,

"Of this great Monarch aemulous, o Prince,
Your mighty Deeds will wond'ring Realms convince,
That you'll a publick Benefactor prove,
Crown'd with Applause and universal Love." B. I, p. 18.

His belief in the regal authority and prerogative is quite conservative. He cannot approve the insurrection in Campania, because

"If Princes never with tyrannick Aim
Subvert their Empire's fundamental Frame,
Nor breaking thro' the sacred Rules of Right
Ravage with barb'rous Rage and lawless Might
Their Realms, the Subject has no Plea to take
The Field in Arms for meer Religion's Sake." B. V. p. 163.

"I can't approve
A Sword unsheathed ill Prelates to remove." B. V, p. 158.

Particularly interesting however is the fact that among those receiving punishment in Gehenna were those who

"While they held o'er Conscience awful Sway,
Made scepter'd Princes crosier'd Lords obey." B. VIII, p. 279.

There too he saw the punishment of the blood-thirsty Assyrian lords, the avaritious Medes and Persians, Grecian tyrants, and Roman chiefs (pp. 273—275). He seems to have marked his teaching well, for —

"Alfred for all great princely Virtues fam'd
Who at his Country's Pow'r and Greatness aim'd,
And strove to raise her Riches and Renown,
With loud Applause succeeds to Albion's Crown." B. XII, p. 416.

In this section it may not be inappropriate to quote each author's own tribute to his sainted king. We therefore give the following from Blackmore's Preface (p. XLI). His simple in-

vocation to the muse, with which the poem opens, is inadequate. —

“To accomplish my Aim I pitched upon Alfred, as a proper general Character to be the principal Agent. An excellent Prince in his Youth, and afterwards a King of consummate Accomplishments. No Character more adorns the History of our Country, than that of the renowned Alfred. A cloud of Witnesses of great Capacity and undoubted Credit, conspire in the Praise of this illustrious Person. It appears by Asserius’s Testimony, who was his contemporary, and the Account given of him by later History, — — — that he was one of the greatest Princes that ever lived.”

Mallet uses the suggestive appellations: “the nation’s father more than lord” (Prol. p. 5), “Alfred, England’s King” (I. 7, p. 22), “All demand their king” (I. 3, p. 18), “our great and glorious Alfred” (II. 2, p. 30), “my honor’d sovereign” (II. 4, p. 34), “prince of every fame possest, prince and patriot both confest” (III. 7, p. 58). Then to be sure he is called besides simply “prince”, “king”.

We find Alfred preserving all through the poem a very high ideal of the kingly office. His humility and love for his subjects are everywhere apparent.

Alfred. -- “Are these times for flattery?” etc. I. 1, p. 13.

“If this sad sight
Could pain thee to such anguish, what must I
Their king and parent feel?” I. 1, p. 14.

“Kings must act;
Restore a ruin’d state or perish with it.” I. 1, p. 15.

The whole speech in I. 7 (pp. 24. 25) is noble. —

“O witness, heaven,
Whose eye the heart’s profoundest depth explores!
That if not to perform my regal task;
To be the common father of my people,
— — — — —
If not to spread, on all good men, thy bounty,
The treasures trusted to me, not my own,
— — — — —
If not for these important ends ordain’d,
May I ne’er poorly fill the throne of England!”

“O no more —
When those whom heaven distinguishes o'er millions,
— — — — —
Accepting the reward, neglect the duty,
Or worse, pervert those gifts to deeds of ruin,
Is there a wretch they rule so base as they.”

I. 7, p. 26.

“For him alone
I wish to reign — by making mankind blest !”

III. 9, p. 63.

After his victory, more than over the restoration of his name he rejoices over the restoration of “lost England to her vigor, fame, and freedom.”

Nor were his people behind in acknowledging his worth.

Devon. — “To bear with such a prince,
The worst of ills, exile, or chains, or death,
Is happiness, is glory.”

I. 1, p. 13.

Corin. — “My humble cottage
Long ages hence, when we are dust, my friends,
In holy pilgrimage oft visited,
Will draw true English knees to worship there,
As at the shrine of some propitious saint.”

II. 2, p. 31.

When Devon told the people that the king still survived, they were renewed in courage and zeal “as if one soul had moved them all” (III. 6, p. 54). The author himself in his prologue says that he is “struck deep, even now, with reverential awe,” and not only lauds his hero thus at the beginning, but toward the close of the piece he dignifies his triumph with visitations of spirits (III. 7, p. 58).

“Prince of every fame possesst !
Prince and patriot both confest !
Thy grateful action shall to latest days
Roll down thy glories in a tide of praise !”

In Redcliffe's poem the appellations are numerous. Besides those of “King”, “Alfred”, used about equally, “Sovereign”, “Alfred the Saxon King” (p. 72) and the like, the following more expressive ones occur. — “Our gracious master” (p. 14), “royal sir” (pp. 34, 35), “our royal master” (p. 56), “our liege” (p. 61), “my Liege” (6 times), “most worthy King” (p. 140), “my gracious Lord” (p. 136), “good my Lord” (p. 168), “our present Lord” (p. 12), “our good King” (p. 77), “your lawful prince” (p. 141),

"the brightest star" (p. 95), "the light to which all eyes were raised" (p. 13), "his people's scorn, a burden to himself" (p. 49).

Alfred's love for his subjects is as apparent in Redcliffe's work as in Mallet's. —

Valet. "Much, no doubt,
His people's misery, and the cruel rage
Of Norsemen, long their scourge, must deeply wound
A sovereign's heart." I. 2, p. 17.

Ethelwolf. — "What
You feel, be sure, is felt by him who sits
Thereon [the throne]: yet differs he from you in that
Your safety his chief aim must ever be." I. 3, p. 20.

Alfred. — "Am I sick at heart,
Sick for my realm beset with cruel foes?
— — — — —
Grievous to all is this, but most to me
Who with my own my people's grief must bear." I. 6, p. 31.

Alfred. — "The fealty you declare confirms the love
I bear you all." V. 8, p. 168.

Alfred. — "Not mean, though rough:
Admit them straight." V. 8, p. 167.

So too, he acknowledges [the worth of simple subjects, and rewards even the lowest that have served him.

[To Godwin.] "In this full presence Earl! well pleased I am
To blaze thy merits." V. 8, p. 166.

[To Danulf and Githra.] "You cannot win my pardon, — non have I
To grant where no offence was giv'n." V. 3, pp. 140, 141.

Nor is the king less regal for his humbleness. —

Alfred. — "Not the poor menial, Cedric, but the King
Now gives you thanks." V. 2, p. 136.

[To Neot.] "I take no offence
At what your conscience dictates, but I claim
My share of that respect whose absence mars
The wisest counsel," etc. I. 6, p. 35.

Not much, however, is added to the conception by the following. —

Alfred. — "A pretty job for one
Who owns a crown, and could in time and place
Put that old gossip on the grate instead
Of her fine cake!"

III. 4, p. 79.

Better is this address to Godwin:

"Godwyn! come near; my bosom is o'erfraught;
You see by grace at length I've reach'd a height,
Whence, looking on through time, I may provide
In some degree for generations call'd
By nature's law to follow this, our own."

V. 8, p. 169.

Because of the disaffection of his subjects, what the people have to say of Alfred is various. —

Cedric. — "He courts his ease; makes of his throne a couch;
Is felt but in taxation. His loose sword
Hangs dead, a leaden sceptre fills his hand."

I. 1, p. 13.

Seneschal. — "What can this tumult mean? Alas! the King,
Once so admired, so loved, of late has lost
Much of his people's reverence."

I. 2, p. 17.

Ordolf refers to "the sceptred hand [that] shakes as with ague" (I. 5, p. 27). Godwin replies

"He still is Alfred, and within him bides
The seed at least of that bright flame which erst
Shot from his youth, and turn'd despair to hope." I. 5, pp. 27. 28.

and later in the play the thane says, "Alas! the brightest star is shaken from our firmament" (III. 7, p. 95), and in IV. 6, p. 120, "The life you 've brought to light, is life to all of Saxon blood." The queen says her lord was "made for a crown, with sword, and skilful pen to boot" (II. 3, p. 49). And the conquered Guthrum acknowledges his veneration. —

"Think not, King Alfred, that your courtesy
Is lost in air; the breath of public fame
Bade me expect no less."

V, 6, p. 158.

The author's own tribute is in few words. In his Dedication he calls his hero "our greatest Saxon king," and in his "Notice" speaks of Alfred's "excelling virtues." "The constitution of King Alfred's mind evidently raised him at all times above the level of both examples [Saxon and Danes]."

In Austin again, besides the common terms "king," "Alfred the King" (I. 1, and II. 1), "I, your King" (II. 3), there occur the appellations "loving Lord and King, my pupil yet my master" (II. 3, p. 48), "Lord of England, England's Comfort, England's Shepherd, England's Darling" (II. 3, pp. 51, 52 and IV. 2, p. 94).

Alfred's noble purposes are already referred to in many places under preceding characteristics. Further in IV. 2 (p. 92), he says:

"For me I have no other wish on earth
Save to have long remembrance after me
Of something done for England!" ¹⁾

And he regards work as "the noblest lot and life of man" (I. 2, p. 12). At the camp on Athelnay he even provides "clews of net yarn for the weaving women that no hands hang idle in Alfred's camp" (II. 1, p. 34).

Alfred. — "For he who lives
Thrall unto fleshly bondage is not fit
To be the lord of others." II. 4, p. 55.

That humbleness of nature which gives a king half his nobility is clearly marked. —

Alfred. — "and rightfully
She rates my fault, I should have watched the hearth,
Nor failed in the plain task she set me to,
The price of shelter." I. 3, p. 18.

After he has helped the serfs at their work in II. 1 (p. 34), he asks, "Am I free to go, masters?"

"Life is God's gift, for godlike purposes." II. 2, p. 38.

This side of Alfred's nature Austin has developed with considerable affect. Witness particularly the tenderness shown by the king to Edgiva when she comes to his court (II. 4) and in the wood (III. 4).

¹⁾ Compare the Boetius: "*þæt is nu hraðost to secganne, þæt ic wilnode weorþfullice to libanne þa hwile þe ic lifede, and æfter minum life þam monnum to læfanne þe æfter me wæren min gemynd on godum weorcum.*" — Cardale, p. 92.

Alfred. — “We’ll think of that to-morrow. For to-night,
You needs must lie in Athelney.” II. 4, p. 60.

“and you have nothing lost,
Saving the jewel, easily forgone.” II. 4, p. 61.

“Already doth she dream
Way-weary child.” III. 5, p. 79.

Nothing similar occurs in Blackmore, nor does Mallet or Redcliffe present this side of Alfred’s nature with comparable grace. And yet the hero is by no means lacking in regal dignity. The two qualities are well blended in the following:

“Ealdormen, and Thanes, and Free Men all,
Whom here I see, banded in battle-gear,
Kin of my sceptre, helpmates of my sword,
To you I come, your King and Overlord,
Offering and seeking wisdom — — —
— — — — — But let none think
That I am less a King, or you more base,
That of such trappings we awhile are scant
As Peace can hang about a Ruler’s hearth.
— — — — —
Should I bemoan the fashion of the world,
Tonsure the head Pope Leo’s very hand
Anointed kingly, and slink hence to Rome
A niddering pilgrim?” II. 3, pp. 43, 44.

His love for his people, though not spoken in the naïveté of Mallet, is quite as easily felt. —

“You answer as beseemeth those that clung
Close to my side at Ashdune.” II. 3, p. 45.

“Rise boy! Your love is loyal; and no maid,
That, bred on English soil and fain to bide
By English hearthfire, hath not in her blood
The blur of bondage, can be held unmeet
To grace the bed and settle of a King.” II. 4, p. 57.

Alfred’s position with reference to the Church is true to history. —

“For ’tis my wish to see, in this strong land,
A manly State wedded to a wifely Church,
The helpmate this but that one still the lord.
For as a woman, so too is the Church,
Of a diviner nature, but on earth
They should but meekly counsel, then obey.” III. 4, p. 93.

Of this we have nothing in Mallet; and on the whole, as in other cases, Austin's king is more explicitly defined.

How the people repaid this trust is shown in many ways. In II. 2 (p. 37), by their obeisance; in II. 3 (pp. 45, 46, 51) by the ready acquiescence of the Freemen to his words; in the conversation between Ethelnoth and Plegmund at the opening of scene 2, act II.

Quotations from the last reference have been given in the sections treating of Alfred as soldier and lawgiver. When after long waiting he appears (p. 37), Ethelnoth exclaims, "Thank Heaven! you are safe, nor for your wayward danger paid with life." Many quotations have also been made to present Alfred as lawgiver and scholar from the conversation of the freemen at the opening of scene 3, act II. Finally at the close of this scene and again at the close of the poem his assembled subjects hail him:

"Long live Alfred!
Long rule Alfred!
England's Comfort,
England's Shepherd,
England's Oarsman,
England's Darling!"

For the author's own tribute to his hero-king, we give a few lines from Austin's preface. — "But Alfred has neither stigma nor stain. A ruler without arrogance, a soldier without personal ambition, a lawgiver devoid of pedantry, a poet free from vanity, a saint untainted by fanaticism, Alfred laid the foundation, in days of distressing trouble, of our society, our language, and our naval power. — — — — He towers before us, actual if indefinite. — — — — But the qualities that at times seem distantly divine, leave him still invested with the familiar and winning attributes of man." (p. XI.)

We leave further generalizations on this section to be considered in our conclusion.

7. The Husband.

Having now treated of Alfred as a public character, it remains for us to look at him in private life, as husband and father.

In Blackmore, to be sure, we cannot consider the hero in the light here discussed. He promises well however in B. XII (pp. 447—8).

“I ask Elsitha for my beauteous Bride,
Whose lovely Form and Qualities divine
To my admiring Eyes unrivall'd shine.
When first the Fair sunk in Distress I view'd,
Her Charms in Part my yielding Heart subdu'd;
But since she owns the Christian's sacred Creed,
And in her Breast receives the heav'nly Seed
Of Truth divine, my Passion I approve,
And hope I feed not unsuccessful Love.”

Mallet takes great pains to present the hero's conjugal affection—in fact almost makes it the basis of all the other virtues. He thus gives it undue prominence and unconsciously reduces it to ridicule. Alfred is called by his wife “my charmer” (II. 1, p. 31), “my Alfred” (II. 8, pp. 39, 40), “my lord, my life, my husband, my guardian angel, Alfred” (II. 8, p. 39), “my king and husband” (II. 8, p. 41), “my life, my love” (II. 9, p. 45), “O my love, my heart's sole rest and refuge” (III. 2, p. 48). We first come upon this phase of the poem in II. 2, where (pp. 31, 32) a pretty love-song is sung by “a person unseen”, closing with

“Then tell him what ages of pain
I felt while I liv'd in his sight!
I feel till I see him again!”

It seems most likely that this is a song of Alfred's wife, who is found shortly after in the neighborhood. The lady rescued by Alfred and Corin in II. 8 turns out to be Eltruda, and then there follows a scene between husband and wife —

Alfred. — Ye powers! what do I hear? — Yes—yes—'tis she!
My wife, my queen, the treasure of my soul!

Eltruda. — My Alfred!

Alfred. — My Eltruda!

— — — — —

Eltruda. — Tho' terrible at first,
Blest be the tempest that has driven me hither
Into this safe, this sacred harbor!

Alfred. — Come,
O come, and here repose thee from the storm
Within these sheltering arms.”

pp. 38—41.

And more of the same kind, covering four pages. Again they come together in II. 9. —

Alfred. — Behold my queen and infant-sons!
Edwin—thy king's whole wealth is there summ'd up!

— — — — —

Eltruda—we must part —

Eltruda. — What do I hear?

My life, my love —" etc.

P. 45.

In III. 2 (pp. 48, 49) we have *Eltruda's* lament, continued in the next scene.

Eltruda. — "O my torn, tortur'd heart! what is the hour?"

But *Alfred* returns victorious, and then —

"*Alfred.* — In these lov'd arms

To lose all sorrow, and all bliss to find!

Eltruda. — O from what fears deliver'd for thy life,

And in that life for a whole people's being,

I thus receive thee back! thus fold thee safe!

Love only, love like mine, can feel, not utter!"

III. 8, p. 59.

But she has been uttering all along empty platitudes. Mallet's poem has certainly lost much through this excess.

In *Redcliffe's* work the hero is called by his queen "my *Alfred*" (p. 165), and in II. 3, p. 49,

"*Alfred*, my king, my husband—dearer yet —

My children's father, — loved, admired by all,

So full of brightest, greatest qualities," etc.

She is a discreet woman, and to win such encomiums her husband must have been worthy. In II. 3, p. 51, she is ruled by him. —

"You sign to be alone: to leave you thus

Is hard indeed; but to obey shows best

The sacred tie that binds my heart to yours."

Her grief at his disappearance knows no bounds. —

"Judge of my grief and wonder by your own,

But never, never can ye sound the depth

Of my bereavement! — — — — —

But ask not my assent on mere surmise

To deem him dead in whom my life is wrapt!"

II. 6, p. 61.

Such too her joy when he is found again. —

“My heart! it swells to bursting: what few tears
Sorrow hath left me, sparkle into those
Of gladness, which the vulgar signs of joy
But ill express.”

IV. 6, p. 120.

And Alfred's affection for his queen is not less than hers for him. —

Alfred. — “What have we here? Elswitha? and in tears?
Queen of my heart! why this?”

II. 3, p. 50.

He depends not a little upon her. “You must share my load” (II. 3, p. 51). When recognized by Cedric he asks earnestly, “You saw the Queen? in health? our children too?” In III. 4, p. 78, however, Alfred makes a harsh remark concerning Githra which does not well correspond with our ideal of his character. —

“What a frank shrew!

Like all her sisterhood, she would exalt
The devil in her tongue.”

This sounds more like the author of the “*Proverbia Alfredi.*”

“wymmmon is word-wop
and haveþ tunge to swift.”¹⁾

In Austin, Ethelswitha does not once speak. She however with her daughter and noble maidens carries the mead-bowl around to the thanes and ealdormen, and then takes her place in the witan. Alfred bids her build the nunnery at Shaftsbury, which passage is quoted on p. 65, and then he continues —

“I have your leave for this, Lady and Wife,
Whom still a silent helpmate at my side,
And by that silence keeping me more strong,
I pray to have, till strength avails no more.

— — — — —
To you in endless token of the trust
That you have had in me and I in you,
I do bequeathe Wantage and Athelney,
My cradle, and my refuge in this war,
To hold as free as you have held my love.”

II. 3, p. 47.

¹⁾ An old Engl. Miscellany, Morris, p. 118.

With the exception of a reference to the queen in II. 3, (p. 44) simply for the sake of illustration, this is all that is said of her, and it is enough. Ethelswitha appears a much more probable character for the wife of Alfred than does Eltruda. The idea we gain of Alfred as a husband from each of the three poems in which he so appears corresponds with what history records of his character in general and with the views he himself gives in his *Boethius* on connubial felicity.¹⁾

8. The Father.

In Blackmore we cannot consider Alfred as a father, but one passage is intended to show the filial affection of the young prince. Upon learning from English merchants of the death of his father Atulpo,

"from his Eyes
Tears plenteous gush'd, and from his Bosom Sighs,
That from a filial strong Affection spring
To a wise Father and a gracious King," etc. B. XII, p. 339.

In the 8th scene of act II. of Mallet's poem, after rescuing his wife, Alfred asks after his children, and they are brought in. He greets them with —

"O welcome to my soul — O happy Alfred!
Thus to have rescued what the feeling heart
Most dear and precious holds." p. 41.

They address him as "Father and king." (p. 42.) Alfred embraces them and laments that they have not even so many of earth's comforts as the peasant's offspring, but are "with pain and peril wandering through a land, a ruin'd country you were born to rule!" (p. 42). Of the hermit he asks,

"Who can bear
The shaft that wounds him thro' an infant's side?" II. 9, p. 43.

Can public trust,
O reverend sage! destroy the softer ties
That twine around the parent's yearning heart?" II. 9, p. 44.

In II. 9 he gives instructions regarding the children's education.

¹⁾ Compare Alfred's remarks on connubial felicity, in his *Boethius*, Ed. Cardale, pp. 42, 44.

By Redcliffe very little is said of Alfred as a father. He is named such but three times (pp. 19. 49, 119). The royal children appear upon the stage but once, in II. 3, p. 49, when the king remarks,

“The children too
Have not their wonted cheer; they seem to feel,
Not knowing why, that all is out of tune.”

p. 50.

One other reference to them has been noted under the preceding section.

In Austin, where the son is older, we have a much more definite picture. We see the kindness of the father's heart early in the poem, where he finds his son sporting with Edgiva in the wood. —

Alfred (to himself) — “Edward! — — Unkingly boy! In these stern
times
To fleet the May thus softly! But in youth,
As in these springtime saplings of the glade,
Floweth the mead of heedless wantonness,
That will not take life gravely! And the maid?
Sooth, he hath chosen well — if honestly.”

I. 3, p. 21.

“Not in safe coffer should we lock our lives,
But put them out to peril, that our sons
May be the richer for the stake we won.”

II. 2, p. 38.

But a father that is always indulgent is not the best of fathers.

Alfred. — “Where were you, Edward, yesterday at noon?”
— — — — — “And why went you there?”

Edward. — To greet the loveliest maiden in the land.
Forgive me Sir! but oh, if you could see
How fair, how —

Alfred. — — Hold! enough! a fault avowed
Is sooth a fault forgiven. Bating untruth,
There is no blot I could not brook in you,
Hoping to mend it. — — — — —
And I would liefer see you hewn to death
By Pagan battle-axe than soil your lips
With craven paltering.” etc.

II. 4, pp. 53, 54.

“But Edward, can it be in these mirk days,
You dally in the dreamy ways of love,
Now, that your one fast thought by day, your one
Fond hope when moist sleep loosens all your limbs,
Should be for England!”

II. 4, pp. 56, 57.

When Edgiva is unexpectedly brought in, the king sternly bids his son "go hence." Then in the youth's absence he nobly acknowledges the maiden's hope. How kindly and yet unflinching are his directions to Edward before setting out with Edgiva on his mission to the Danish camp (III. 2, pp. 68—70).

"Fear not for us,
But do my bidding to the uttermost.
— — — — —
Till then, farewell! Remember who you are,
And who you will be!"

p. 70.

Austin has certainly given us here a beautiful picture. And beautiful is the tribute of the son to such a father. And when the "Pagan wolves" are finally overcome and the youth makes plea once more for the maid, saying, "Noble I knew her!" Alfred replies,

"Nobly wed her then!
And when God calls me to Himself, for men
Know not how long or little they will stay,
May offspring worthy of your fair love and you,
Saxon with Dane, hand down the English throne!"

IV. 2, p. 93.

Conclusion.

Among these four conceptions of King Alfred, no one will hesitate to award the superiority to Mr. Austin's hero. In fact, the two later works only are in any measure worthy of their subject. Blackmore's Alfred, although evincing the various characteristics discussed in the preceding pages, in spite of his impossible undertakings, turns out in most respects to be only an indefinite generalization. He is a human machine, exemplary in all its parts, but without individuality. Mallet and Thompson's conception is more definite and has the traits, indeed, with which history accredits Alfred; but many of them are not as strongly marked as in the historic character. Our general impression from this work is rather that the hero is a private, family man, upon whom, by the action of his subjects and the influence of the supernatural world, the greatness of kingship has been thrust.

Between the conceptions of Redcliffe and Austin the chief difference lies in the fact that although the latter shows greater fidelity to history in details than any of his predecessors in this

field, yet he may to some extent have idealized his hero. Redcliffe, on the other hand, deals so freely with Alfred's mysterious disappearance and its uncertain causes that the faults of the king, whether conjectured or real, prevent his great strength of character from appearing in its fullness. It may be due to the general tendency to idealize a national hero, or it may come from our inability to conceive past ages clearly, or it may result simply from Mr. Austin's superior art. — At all events, the reader feels that in spite of some liberties taken with the facts, England's Darling corresponds most nearly to the king of whom Green the historian said, "He lived solely for the good of his people. He is the first instance in the history of Christendom of the Christian king, of a ruler who put aside every personal aim or ambition to devote himself to the welfare of those whom he ruled. So long as he lived he strove 'to live worthily'; but in his mouth a life of worthiness meant a life of justice, temperance, self-sacrifice." On Mr. Austin's poem there has been passed much unjust criticism. Those who go to this simple tale of love expecting to find in it an echo of the harp that rang with the "Idylls" of Arthur, are naturally disappointed. Breathing a deep love of country and a passionate fondness for nature, it is the elegiac pastoral of a faithful bard to his sainted king. Those who take exceptions at such excellent bits of realism as the song of the lighthearted peasants who would "let the world go hang", display a famulus-like prudishness. A great poem it does not claim to be. A pleasing and ennobling work it certainly is; and it possesses much wealth of dramatic effect and suggestiveness. Our gratitude is due its author for his effort, in so many points successful, to fill the "long vacant niche" of one most worthy of a place in the temple of English song.



I, James Loring Arnold, was born on the 14th of July, 1868, in Brooklyn, N. Y., U. S. A. I received my early education in the public schools of that city, including the primary and grammar departments and the high school. I completed my preparatory studies in the high school of Yonkers, N. Y., and entered Columbia College, New York City, in 1887. There I pursued the regular course of arts, choosing electives in the English department, and was graduated with the class of '91. For the next three years I taught in the Yonkers High School. In June, 1894, I came abroad and matriculated in the university of Jena, where for one semester I heard lectures by Professors Eucken, Rein, Ziehen, Winkelmann. The following semester I came to Leipzig and have here been an attendant at courses by Professors Wülker, Sievers, Volkelt, Hirt, and at seminars of Professors Wülker, von Bahder, Volkelt. My sincere thanks are due Professor Wülker for his kindly assistance in my English studies.



Arnold, James Loring,

King Alfred in English poetry

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